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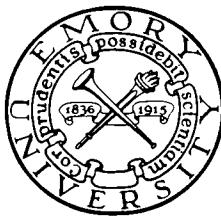
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THE
FAMILY SCAPEGRACE

OR

RICHARD ARBOUR

BY

JAMES PAYN

NEW EDITION.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

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THE FAMILY SCAPEGRACE;

OR,

RICHARD ARBOUR.

PREFATORY.



SUPPOSE there has scarcely ever been any large household, at any period of the world's history, so fortunate as not to possess one *mauvais sujet*—one Disgrace to the Family: there *have* been households, such as Jacob's of old, wherein there have been ten Disgraces to two Credits, but that was an exceptional case. I speak within bounds, therefore, when I make use of the words of Mr. Wadsworth Longfellow—

“There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one *Black Sheep* is there;
There is no fireside, howe'er defended,
But hath one vacant chair,”

about whose should-be occupant there is a silence in the

domestic circle, and only an unpleasant whisper elsewhere. Like many other whispers, however, this circulates much more universally than any outspoken report. The name which we become most familiar with when we have made the acquaintance of his brethren—and often enough before we have made it—is poor Dick's. The Disgrace to the Family is generally a Dick. Godfathers and godmothers in one's baptism should look to this. Tom, too, is rather a dangerous sort of name to give a lad ; but Alexander is safe enough ; and as for James—I never even so much as heard of a James going wrong, except in the Stuart family. Nobody ever calls Dick, Richard—that is, “not since it happened, you know”—except his mother. “My poor dear Richard,” she says, when she speaks of him at rare times to his earthly father, and at all times when she prays for him, as she does continually, to his Father which is in heaven. Dick has all the world against him except his mother and me. I always did like Dick, and always shall ; a weakness which—being a James myself, and out of the reach of any possible sympathy with the young reprobate—is not a little creditable. “Well,” say I, to the friends of the family, “since you are always saying, ‘He was born bad, you see ;’ and as I know that he had a bad name given to him at the baptismal font, would it not have been flying in the face of Predestination, if he had not ‘turned out bad’ also ? Why, of course it would.”

Although people talk about “It,” and “That bad business,” it must be confessed that the youth is not often made a castaway for his first fault. His usual course is to commit a long list of misdemeanours, culminating in some offence, which, although serious, would not of itself have placed him outside the pale of forgiveness. I have

known a young gentleman's character to be irreproachable up to the age of fourteen years, at which epoch he committed an atrocious and unextenuated child-murder ; but he was not a favourite of mine either before or after that event, and his Christian name (or what is accustomed to pass for such in Wales, his native country) was Cadwallader. *He*, however, be pleased to observe, was by no means a Black Sheep—which may, after all, be merely a healthy variety of the species—but one that had an evil disease in him, fatal to all his kind—the Rot ; not in the foot, indeed, as in the quadruped's case, but at his heart.

The Black Sheep proper (which, however, is an adjective but rarely applicable to him) is often only black outside ; of an external appearance obviously objectionable indeed, but, within, very tolerable mutton.

I have in my time known not a few of these unfortunates, and my kindness towards them has led several (they being confiding creatures, who always wear their hearts upon their sleeves, of which circumstance the daws take great advantage) to reveal to me the history of their lives. Out of which several narratives I am about to compile the following biography, for the good of my species (as well as for other reasons which need not be here set down) ; just as the warning beacon-fire, lit upon some wave-fretted promontory on stormy nights, is not made up of a single tree, marked from the first for such a purpose by the cruel axe, but out of many. If, in one single bark, bearing full sail upon the fatal breakers, the careless steersman shall perceive its flame, and seize the flapping helm while there is time, thereby preserving ship and cargo, it will be well indeed : but if, evoked by this tiny danger-signal, one life-boat, that would else have lain securely in harbour, be induced to put out to the

driving vessel, and give her aid, ere she become an utter wreck, it will be better still. A little help is often all she needs, although she looks in such a sad plight to us, on land. And for endeavour of this sort, be sure, whether it succeed or not, the rescuer may count for certain on one day getting salvage.





CHAPTER I.

A FAMILY GROUP.

RICHARD ARBOUR was the fifth child and the third son of parents who considered their quiver sufficiently stocked with that sort of missile before his advent, which, moreover, occurred somewhat unexpectedly. The wind of a not particularly joyful dawn blew free in the silken sail of his infancy, three weeks or so before that little shallop was expected upon the great ocean of life. The hypocrisy of "Welcome, Little Stranger," would not perhaps have been inscribed upon his pincushion, no matter what notice of his arrival might have been vouchsafed beforehand, but, as it was, there were absolutely not enough pins; there was a total insufficiency of flannel: and, as for his cradle, it was a something knocked up out of his eldest brother's wheelbarrow (who never forgave that appropriation of his property), and looked, even when it was fitted up, and *en grande tenue*, a great deal more like an Indian "tikinigan" than a Christian bassinette. His mother, poor thing, was glad perhaps to look upon his little mottled carcass; but nobody who had met his papa at 2 A.M on that gusty December morning at the doctor's door, with his silk umbrella blown inside out, and one shoe and one slipper on, would have dreamed of congratulating *him*.

How differently does Paterfamilias treat the first and fifth of these post-nuptial incidents ! In the former case “our medical man,” not yet become “our family doctor,” is warned to keep himself from distant journeys, in anticipation of the important event ; while that awful woman with the bundle—for we never yet saw one of her class with box or bag—is welcomed into the house, like the monster horse into Troy, bringing subjugation and desolation with her for weeks and weeks before it is absolutely necessary. Then the husband—not yet Head of the Family—banished once more into Bachelordom and a turn-up bedstead, starts up o’ nights with night-cap behind ear, and thinks he is wanted to fetch Dr. Babbicombe a score of times before the real occasion, which commonly takes place when he is out of the way ; spending an hour, perhaps, with some friend of his youth, and a cigar—an accident which afflicts the new-made father with the acutest pangs of conscience. But when such an affair has happened four times already, Paterfamilias takes it quieter a good deal : doesn’t see any particular cause for hurry ; declines to devote his mansion to Lucina until the last extremity ; and (as we have seen) has eventually not even time to select his shoes of swiftness.

Mr. Benjamin Arbour was a tender-hearted husband, too, and in his ardent anxiety, scarcely felt the cold at all until he had reached home again, when getting into a damp bed in the attic chamber—for there was no fire for him to sit up by anywhere, except where his presence was forbidden—he became conscious that, as a gentleman subject to spitting of blood from the lungs, he had not been doing an entirely prudent thing. His teeth chattered so when Dr. Babbicombe came up to tell him the news, that that physician ascribed the phenomenon to marital anxiety, and at once hastened to allay it.

“It’s all right, Mr. Arbour,” exclaimed he, cheerfully: “it’s all right, and it isn’t twins.”

“Is it a bub-bub-bub-bub?” inquired the father, as though his teeth were castanets.

“Yes, it’s a boy,” replied the doctor, in a tone of commiseration.

“That’s just like my luck,” quoth the disgusted parent: “they cost just twice as much as girls, and I have to teach ‘em.”

Mr. Benjamin Arbour might have spared himself this last reflection, for he was not fated to become tutor to his fifth offspring at all. The damp attic and the slippared foot together were too much for the poor gentleman, and he was carried off by consumption within a few weeks of the birth of his third boy. Our hero may therefore be said to have commenced his career in this world by committing parricide. That was the view his eldest brother and sister—Adolphus and Maria—always took of it. These were not nice young people. Adolphus had an enormous mouth, without any lips, sandy hair, sandy whisk—but that is anticipating matters—white-brown complexion, and green eyes; or, at least, one of them was a good deal more green than hazel. Maria had black hair and a yellow skin, but she had one mind in common with her brother, and therefore it may be easily imagined that they were not very well provided in that respect. We are but too often apt to speak of persons’ minds as being “bad,” when the more applicable term by far would be “incomplete.” Our young friends above alluded to possessed several mental gifts: the talents for getting and for keeping; determination, perseverance, and (in particular) humility to their social superiors; while their prudence was so remarkable, that although the bump of that organ must have been tre-

mendous (if the science of phrenology is worth a moment's attention) on both their heads, they concealed all evidence of the matter from the outward world. Some other virtues however—not without value in many eyes—were, as it is written in the Modern Athens, quite “amissing;” especially those connected with the affections, which were in their case confined to that powerful passion which some philosophers assert to be the motive cause of all good works—namely, Self-love. It may, we are aware, be urged, that these matters should be artistically made to disclose themselves during the course of this history, but we think that in so doing we should treat our public very scurvily; for would it be right to suffer these two persons, throughout I don't yet know how many chapters, to impose upon *them*, just as they tricked the world, until the very last, in actual life? No. No Reader, however Gentle, would endure, after so many weeks of prostrate adoration of these idols, to be informed that their feet were, after all, but of the commonest clay, and (by a too obvious corollary) that he himself had been but a benighted worshipper.

Johnnie Arbour, the second boy, with his apple-cheeks and beady eyes, was a good-natured lad enough—so long as you did not vex him. He would never covet nor desire another boy's toys, nor permit another boy to get beyond coveting his. Having considerable independence of character, and not being desirous of a playmate—Brother Dolly, perhaps having given him an unfavourable opinion of that sort of article—he had not been anxious for the new arrival; but since he *had* made his appearance, he was prepared to put up with him, as with the multiplication table, stale bread on Monday mornings, the transitory nature of lollipops, or any other necessary evil.

But Margaret, “rare pale Margaret,” our Maggie, every-

body's Maggie (ah, how Dick's manner used to change when he spoke to us of her and of his mother ! No angry scorn about him then, and with the voice that had grown hoarse with paying back scorn for scorn to half the world, become as soft and gentle as a woman's !)—Maggie, we say, hailed “ittle buddy's” advent with rapture, holding it highest treat to stand afar off and see him in his tub—poor papa's foot-bath—or to be suffered to delicately dint his cheek with her tiny finger. Maggie was frail as a lily, and almost as white ; but if any mortal creature, from King Herod to a sausage-maker, had threatened to harm that baby, she would have drawn bodkin, and done battle to the death.

As for our hero's mother, we are introduced to the sweet lady at an evil time, when the gentle eyes are red with weeping, and the delicate frame is tried with watching ; but she is fair, as Maggie's mother should be, even yet. Her only earthly consolation, now that the dark shadow of death has crossed the threshold, and points towards the lover of her youth—the sharer of life's hopes and fears, so long, that all existence that has been passed by her away from him seems but as a dream—is her newborn infant. As he lies, after the manner of the luxurious ancients, upon his ivory couch, and takes his meals recliningly, he little knows what eyes of holiest love are feeding on him in their turn.

Oh well-defended babe, that hast by night and day a sentinel not all the treasures of the world could bribe to do thee wrong, and whose Angel stands before the very throne of Heaven, sleep on while yet secure, with thy small hand curled like a rose-leaf beneath thy mother's breast !



CHAPTER II.

FATHERLESS.

Thas been suggested to us that while mentioning some characteristics of the Arbour family, we have yet been guilty of a very serious omission. For all that has been told at present, they may have belonged to one of the vulgarest classes of society, and consequently have been altogether beneath human—that is to say, properly constituted human—interest. Let us hasten, therefore, to set this matter in its correct light while there is yet time. At the risk, and indeed the certainty, of cutting off electrical relations with a considerable number of readers, whose sensibilities we have no desire to shock, and whose well-cultivated hair we would on no account cause to stand on end by bringing them face to face with persons of “small means”—at the risk, we repeat, of diminishing our audience by emptying the Dress-circle and the Stalls at the very outset, we confess, once for all, that the Arbours were not and never had been “carriage people.” But on the other hand, ladies and gentlemen of the Pit and Galleries, neither were they merely “genteel” or “respectable.” The Arbours were a round or two in the social ladder above *you*, oh middle classes! and therefore, as we conclude, not by any means unworthy of *your* interest and sympathy.

Mr. Benjamin Arbour, now struggling hopelessly with consumption, was in the receipt of five hundred a year or so; but that income was, alas! so peculiarly his own that it ceased with his life. He filled also a perhaps responsible and certainly mysterious office committed to him by the government of his native country. He was an Authorised Commissioner for witnessing the Deeds of Married Women. Whether the duties of this post are, in reality, so disgracefully inquisitorial as its name would imply, we do not know, but we may be certain that Mr. Arbour had his consort's full permission to discharge them. He had had probably about as few secrets intrusted to him throughout his life as anybody—for men, composed one half of quicksilver and the other half of the milk of human kindness, are known to be but indifferent repositories for such things—and he had certainly never had a single secret from his wife. They had been married nearly fifteen years, and nevertheless could scarcely be termed middle-aged people. It would be no exaggeration to say that until now, when he found himself dying, he had never once seriously regretted the having wedded Letitia Banks. The imprudent Boy and Girl, as they had been called, had been very happy together for those three lustrums, in spite of all good-natured prophecies to the contrary.

Ingram Arbour, the merchant—elder and only brother to Benjamin—had even predicted their final settlement in the workhouse of their native district in Devonshire, and he was a man who had a reputation for judgment too. *He* also had been left a life-interest in a sum of money which secured him five hundred a year, and perhaps possessed it still—unless it had been advantageously disposed of—but that was a mere nothing in comparison with his present possessions. *He* had not found himself

hampered with a wife and family in the second holidays after he had left school. *He* had not bought a cottage—the one redeeming circumstance connected with which in *his* eyes, was, that it was on the bank of a river, which might perhaps afford accidental provision for surplus children—nor buried himself in the country, like a talent laid up in a napkin, accumulating nothing but small-change. It was the contemplation of that small-change that chiefly troubled poor Benjamin now, and made him almost wish that he had remained a bachelor. He had faith in a good Providence, and did not doubt that a Raven of some sort would be sent to feed those hungry mouths ; but he would certainly have preferred to have felt himself more deeply connected with the Eagle. That was the name of the Assurance Office from which one thousand pounds would be due to the family after his death, besides which there were two thousand pounds of Leety's own, and that was all.

“I wish, dearest,” gasped he, as she was smoothing his pillow upon the very last day that she ever had that loving office to perform for him—“I do so wish that it was more.” He spoke so low that even the ear of love failed to catch his meaning ; but Leety heard the word “wish,” and all her faculties were at once devoted to find out what this desire of the dying man might be.

“Do you wish to see our children, Benjy dear ?”

She had called him by that fond title ever since that walk upon the purple Devon moorland far away and long ago, where they two had plighted their troth. What a miracle of strength and beauty he had then seemed to her, and now this ghastly shadow was all that remained of him, itself about to flit into the darkness of Death ! Yet, be sure, he was never so dear to her before. Not if she could have lived her life again, at that moment, would

she have spent it otherwise as regarded that departing clay. She would have chosen no other than he though this end had been foreshown from the beginning. Not one of the wretched minutes which yet remained to her to watch that still loving face would she have bartered for centuries of Paradise.

“Do you wish to see our children, Benjy, dear?”

He neither spoke nor stirred, but his eyes, which were yet clear and even brilliant, and that watched her every motion, replied : “Yes, dearest.”

Adolphus and Maria, Johnnie and Maggie, were marched in therefore—the two latter hand in hand, for they were smitten with vague terror, understanding only that that Something was impending whose coming had kept the house so still for weeks. But the eyes said ; “There is yet another, Leety ;” and No. 5 was transferred from the nursery to his mother’s arms, who for this once, however, regarded him not, nor sealed his infant eyelids with her lips. The two eldest children were tall enough to lean over the bedside and salute for the last time their father’s forehead ; an operation which they performed in a very rapid and energetic manner, much as a superstitious dealer at whist hastens to tap the trump card as soon as it is turned up, for luck. Johnnie, with his ruddy apple-face turned to the colour of a lemon, climbed up the bed, and said, “Good-bye, father,” in compliance with his mother’s whisper, dutifully enough. But little Maggie lay by her father’s side in an agony of grief, and covered his grisly chin with tears and kisses.

There was no need for any farewell between those two, who had been acting, saying, thinking nothing but farewells since Dr. Babbicombe had said in his firm, kind voice : “I can do nothing further, my good friend, now,

but pray for you ;" but as Leety stooped down over him to put her baby's cheek to his mouth, that he too in after-years might know that his father had kissed him, her husband, reminded by that action perhaps of that which had been oppressing his mind before, murmured once again : " I wish, Leety, I do so wish that it was more."

" What *does* he mean ? What does your father mean ?" cried she appealingly, for nothing was more distant from her own thoughts than that which was agitating his.

On this, Maria whispered something to Adolphus, and straightway that young gentleman observed, in spite of her evident reluctance to have her remark repeated : " Please mamma, Maria thinks papa is wishing that he could leave us some more money."

This young lady of ten years old did indeed possess a great sagacity, and even, as we have seen, considerable modesty in the exhibition of it ; and yet there was something uncomfortably just in the remark which nurse Rachael subsequently made in the servants' hall, when describing the above scene in her master's death-chamber : " 'Twas an odd thing for such a mere child to have been thinking of money, at a time like that, too !"

The above wish was the last idea that Mr. Arbour lived to express, and in a few more minutes there was no protector left to poor Leety and her offspring, save Him who makes the Widow and the Fatherless his peculiar care. The bereft devoted woman would not easily have been persuaded, perhaps, to leave that precious clay—would have watched by the casket half the night, though her jewel lay in the place where thieves break not through nor steal—but that a tiny cry arose from No. 5, reminding her that there was a duty and a joy, in this world yet.

For a week, there was a silence throughout the cottage by the river, only broken by sad sounds. The clock ticked on the stairs more solemnly, as though it were discoursing upon matters graver than Time ; the stairs creaked under muffled footsteps ; the servants conversed in muffled tones. Once only a laugh broke forth from the kitchen, arising from some inadvertent domestic, and immediately reprobated by a “For shame, Jane, don’t you remember what has happened !” and succeeded by tears ; and once a prolonged and hearty howl issued from Master Johnnie, who had been very foolishly forbidden by nurse Rachel to spin his humming-top, in consideration of the domestic calamity which had befallen him.

After that weary week, the early summer sun again shone into that reopened chamber, as full of light and warmth as ever, though it seemed not so to her who lay upon the widowed bed, and the memory of the dead man faded fast away from every heart save one, as the darkness dwindles before the dawn. Another life had begun to fill the place of that which had departed, and to the end that it should do so worthily, they carried it in gorgeous cap and flowing linen, to abjure the pomps and vanities of the world at the baptismal font. In a word, No. 5, who had as yet been only registered, was christened, and was named—as Steele, and Savage, and half the scapegraces of the world had been named before him—Richard, the long for Dick.



CHAPTER III.

UNCLE INGRAM.

MR. INGRAM ARBOUR'S estimation of his sentimental brother's prudence and sagacity had not been, as we have seen, a high one ; and he had expressed an unpleasant foreboding concerning that family, between whom and the workhouse of their native parish only some three thousand pounds did now in reality intervene : but the astute merchant had miscalculated matters in one very important particular. He had taken it for granted that Benjamin, who was his junior by many years, would outlive him. He had prophesied future misfortunes with all the unction of a Metternich, under the comfortable impression that the Deluge would take place after his own time. But Benjamin being dead, Uncle Ingram was become the natural guardian of his widow and children ; a position which his sturdy sense of right caused him to accept at once and unsolicited. This respectable Christian merchant, therefore, found himself in a worse predicament than any of those ancient Jews whose piety compelled them to marry their childless sisters-in-law. He had to maintain Mrs. Benjamin Arbour without marrying her, as well as her children, from No. 1 to No. 5 inclusive. Except, therefore, for his great reputation for caution, he might just as well have married when his brother did, and have begotten half-a-dozen children of his own.

This reflection was scarcely a soothing one, even if Mr. Ingram Arbour had been capable of being soothed by a reflection—which he was not. He was a man who did his duty, but without, by any means, denying himself the pleasure of grumbling at it. He would give, and largely, to whomsoever he judged to have a just claim upon him, but he could not be said to be a cheerful giver. Benevolence was with him a mere business transaction, effected out of office-hours, and any act of it had no more accompaniment of delicacy or kindness from him, than if it had been the discounting of a bill. He took things, in general, and prided himself in doing so, for “what they were worth”—by which he meant rather what they would “fetch,” if exposed for sale. He was not, in short, quite the man to be selected to say grace before an indifferent dinner, and far less after one; and that he openly thanked God for having blessed him in the basket and in the store, was the more praiseworthy, since he had a secret conviction that his success had been entirely owing to his own sagacity.

Such was the man who was seated in the little drawing-room of Rose Cottage on a certain July evening after Dick’s christening; and we are introduced to him at a most favourable time, for he had just dined, and dined well, and had within him a bottle of poor Benjy’s best port, which the widow had carefully selected for him. She had done so with no intention beyond that of hospitality, but Uncle Ingram was far too clever to believe it. “Mrs. B. is not such a fool as she looks,” was the doubtful compliment he had conferred in his own mind upon that lady; although he did not spurn the supposed medium of conciliation by any means. On the contrary, he had set the last glass of it between the light and his own eyes in an admiring manner, with various guttural

noises expressive of approval, and only qualified a satisfactory smack of the lips when it was done, by muttering an anxious hope that his deceased brother had paid for it. After which, he had risen from the table, pulled up his shirt-collar, cleared his throat, in preparation for the business statement he was come down from town to enter upon, corrugated his eyebrows, in order to forbid contradiction, and joined his expectant sister-in-law in the drawing-room.

This was a bow-windowed apartment, with the three sashes at present thrown open—for it was a somewhat oppressive, though lovely evening—and the pleasant breeze from the river brought through them the beat of oars, from the frequent pleasure boats coming from or returning to the neighbouring town, and even the splash of the fish, as they leaped out of the smooth but rapid current.

A little island, fringed with willows, immediately fronted the cottage, hiding from it the main channel, the noise of whose passing barges and bargees came mellowed and expurgated by distance; while in the near stream, a punt lay moored, filled with quiet anglers; and three milk-white swans now pruned their feathers, and now exhibited themselves with their heads under water, and their opposite extremities, like gigantic lily-buds perpendicularly in air. In the foreground, six clean stone steps led from the mid-window to a sloping lawn, terminating in a wooden terrace, on which were some half-dozen flower-baskets full of red geraniums, and a sun-dial, curiously carved. It was a charming scene, but one which did not jar the less on that account on him who now beheld it. He did not see it for the first time, it is true, since he had more than once visited the cottage—under protest, and always with sundry expressions of contempt for that fairy

bower—but its quiet beauty had never struck him so deeply before.

“What right,” thought he, “had that brother of mine, with his large family and small income, to have such a place as this? How much better it is than that great dingy house of my own in Golden Square. Those flower-baskets must have cost a pretty penny when they were new, I reckon. If *I* had the right of fishing in this water, I’d startle those poaching vagabonds out in that punt there, pretty quick. That island must be worth something when it isn’t under water, which it is six months of the year or so, I believe; but it’s no good asking Mrs. B. whether osiers are up or not just now, I dare say. If that swan has cygnets born upon it, I should like to know who claims, the proprietor of the land, or the London Company? I dare say, Benjamin never tried that question.”

“Brother Ingram,” observed a musical but melancholy voice, breaking in upon these romantic meditations, “will you take a cup of tea now, or will you smoke a cigar? You must not mind me, you know: my dear Benjy often used to smoke here in evenings such as this.”

“So much the worse for him, Madam,” returned Ingram Arbour; “I dare say he hastened his end by that deleterious practice. I am sure he helped to ruin himself by it—to ruin himself, Madam.”

By the repetition of the word “ruin,” and by conjuring up before his mind’s eye a vision of poverty and destitution, Mr. Arbour contrived to convince himself that he was behaving with a sternness only proportionate to the circumstances of the case; just as one might call up the atrocities of Delhi or Cawnpore, to justify one’s self for committing an unprovoked assault upon a Hindu crossing-sweeper.

The idea of impecuniosity always stirred Mr. Ingram Arbour's bile, just as that of cruelty or oppression arouses the indignation of less commercial persons.

"Why, good Heavens, Madam," continued he, worked up into a sort of temporary jaundice by these judicious reflections, "that man ought to have died worth five-and-twenty thousand pounds, if he had not been an idiot. That is to say, I mean," added he, observing a faint flush to rise in his sister-in-law's cheeks, "if he had not been so unbusiness-like and careless. It was not *my* affair of course, and I always make it a point not to meddle with other people's af—— Hi, you fellows in that punt," roared Mr. Ingram Arbour, interrupting himself with a jerk, and approaching the window, "how do you dare to use a net in this water, you poaching scoundrels? Upon my sacred word of honour, Mrs. Arbour, they are using a net!"

"Hush, Brother Ingram," entreated his sister-in-law; "pray, be quiet; it's only a landing-net; it is only to pull the fish up after they have been hooked."

"I don't care what sort of a net it is," stormed the stickler for the rights of property; "the law says 'a net,' and they have no right to use a butterfly net there without your permission. What is the scoundrel saying, Madam—the poacher in the white straw hat? What is he saying in reply to my question?"

"I can't hear quite distinctly," replied the widow, biting her lips; "but it is something about the Emperor of Morocco, I am afraid, and their most respectful compliments."

"Then they are absolutely laughing at me," quoth Ingram Arbour, "are they? They have chosen *me*, of all men, to be the subject of their senseless ribaldry. Will you kindly favour me with the name of one of those individuals, Madam? Anyone will do."

“I don’t know the person in the straw-hat, Brother Ingram,” replied his sister-in-law with hesitation ; “they are doubtless townspeople, who have taken the boat for the evening.”

“You know the fisherman — the man who owns the boat,” returned the other stubbornly. “I must have that fisherman’s name, if you please, and at once.”

“It was not his fault, brother,” urged the widow pleadingly ; “he could not prevent the persons who had employed him from being impertinent ; he is a very well-conducted—”

“One moment, if you please,” replied her brother-in-law, interrupting her curtly. “Come here, Adolphus : I want to speak to you.”

The boy was ducking his brother and sisters with the garden-engine, but desisted from that occupation, and came obedient to his uncle’s call, with downcast eyes.

“Please, Sir, it wasn’t me began it,” whined he, in a deprecating voice ; “it was Johnnie and Maria, especially Johnnie.”

“That’s a lie,” returned Uncle Ingram with composure, “for I’ve been watching you : and, mind you, never tell *me* a lie again. Who is that fisherman yonder, and where does he live ?”

“His name is John Wilson, and he lives in our cottage down the stream yonder.”

“A very hard-working honest fellow, with a large family,” added Mrs. Arbour.

“But he aint paid his rent, you know, mother,” observed Adolphus, cunningly ; “because I heard you tell him yesterday that next month would do.”

“That’s a sharp lad,” remarked Uncle Ingram ap-

provingly ; “ the proof of the pudding is in the eating, is it not, boy ? You may go away now, for your mother and I are going to have some talk—that is to say, if it be agreeable to you, Letitia ? ”

“ My ears are at your service, brother, to receive whatever you may please to say ; but I have little to tell *you*, I fancy, which you do not already know.”

“ I know a few things relating to practical matters,” returned the other, with a little mollification of manner ; “ and I generally manage to obtain what information I am in want of ; ” and he entered the name of John Wilson into his pocket-book, and shut the clasp with a snap. “ Now, then, to business, Madam. One thousand insurance, and two thousand in the Three per Cents. is, I believe, the total figure which represents your property—all in the world which you and your children have to look to—with the exception of this cottage and garden, yonder island, and right of fishing (I’ll *net* them, the scoundrels, as sure as my name is Ingram Arbour), and the cottage of that man Wilson (I’ll *cottage* him, I reckon, in a manner that shall astonish him), with three or four hundred feet of osier-bank thereto appertaining.”

“ That, I believe, is all, brother.”

“ Excuse me ; you don’t believe it ; you’re *sure* of it. There’s nothing like positive certainty in matters of this kind. You are *sure* that this is all that lies between you and the—— Well, you may thank your stars that there was but one fool in my family ! If I died to-morrow, there would be something like ten times this beggarly pittance for *my* widow ; that is to say, if I had been weak enough to leave one. Now, I dare say, you think me an unsympathising bear, Madam—a rude, mercantile old hunk, without the least generous or charitable feelings about him. Now, don’t say you don’t, Letitia, because I

know you *do*. I say you would much rather see me dead and well 'cut up,' with my money neatly divided among my nephews and nieces, than sitting here, with my feet upon your sofa, giving you unpalatable advice ; and you needn't say you don't, because such a remark would not impress me with an idea of your good sense or veracity. Well, notwithstanding all this, you will find me behave as handsomely, perhaps, in the main, and practically, Madam —*practically*—as any sentimental benevolence-monger of your or any other woman's acquaintance. I am come down here expressly to accept the guardianship of yourself and your family."

"God bless you, Brother Ingram," murmured the widow tremulously. "My dearest Benjy always told me——"

"Then if he did Madam," interrupted the other, "although I do not know what he told you in this particular instance, take my advice, and forget it from this moment. Benjamin was not the sort of man to make observations to be remembered. The chances are fifty to one that the remark which you were about to repeat is destitute of practical truth."

"He always told me, I was going to say, brother, that you had a good heart at bottom, although you took a strange pleasure in concealing the fact from your fellow-creatures."

"Then all I can say, Madam, is," replied the unabashed merchant, "that such a statement of your late husband regarding me was a most unwarrantable impertinence. However, what I have got to say is this : these children of yours must not be brought up in idleness. You must be content to live in a style quite different from that to which you have been hitherto accustomed. I dare say, you will think it very hard if I say, you must

leave this cottage, this scene, these comforts, and exchange them for indifferent quarters—in the neighbourhood of Golden Square, for instance."

"I am prepared for any sacrifice, Brother Ingram."

"Sacrifice ! Madam—why the woman's mad !—I speak of a *necessity*. When starvation looks in at the window, and the sheriff's officer comes to the back-door, the debtor is not said to make a sacrifice, I reckon, although his goods are generally sold at one."

Mrs. Benjamin Arbour was not in sufficiently good spirits to appreciate this *jeu d'esprit* as it deserved, but her brother-in-law enjoyed it hugely. When dull men do make a joke, however feeble, they are not apt to let it escape in a hurry, but mouth it about as a child does a lollipop, until the observers are sometimes a little sick of the exhibition ; but, on the other hand, its effect is mollifying to the dull man. Mr. Ingram Arbour was positively charmed with this *bon mot* of his, which was not the first—by one—which he had indulged in for the last five-and-forty years.

" You know goods are said to be sold at a tremendous sacrifice," observed he in explanation.

Whereat Mrs. Benjamin, good lying woman, affected to see the matter in its proper humorous light, and laughed after a fashion that nature doubtless resented bitterly.

" What I was going to say," continued she, " was, that I would leave the cottage to-morrow, if you thought it right or expedient that I should do so, Brother Ingram ; although, of course, the memories and associations that hang around this place——"

" Well, Madam, for my part," interrupted the merchant, " I only believe in those sort of fixtures of which the house-agent can make some valuation. It may or may not be as you say ; but these sofas are better than horse-

hair ones, and it is pleasanter to be your own mistress than at the mercy of some drunken lodging-housekeeper anyway. Therefore, I say, stop at Rose Cottage if you will, Madam, and keep your girls and younger boys about you. Nay, Letitia, I want no thanks ; and, indeed, you might have stopped here without my permission, as far as that goes, until your three thousand pounds had dwindled away to nothing. However, I'll see that that doesn't happen, if you'll only leave matters entirely in my hands. Adolphus shall return to town with me, and begin work in my office at once ; and the other boys may follow him in time—if you are not too proud, that is, to permit the young gentlemen to engage in mercantile pursuits. You have a hundred a year of your own to spend, mind, and if your outgoings should come to double that sum, or even a little over, I will pay the surplus, Letitia—as your nearest relative and natural protector—out of my own pocket. Nay, Madam, I am not a guardian angel, nor, as I should imagine, anything like it, and I tell you honestly that I had much rather that every person should support his own wife and children, by personal exertions when alive, and by bequest after his death ; but, however others have neglected *their* duty, Madam, you will not find me shirk mine."

It may be easily imagined that the widow gratefully accepted this proposition, and gladly intrusted to Mr. Ingram Arbour the treasurership of her little fortune and the control of her affairs. This matter finished, her brother-in-law was proceeding to give her his views concerning the management of her household, which, as emanating from a bachelor who had been under the conduct of housekeepers for a quarter of a century, would doubtless have proved original and interesting in a

high degree, when he became suddenly conscious that the attention of Mrs. Benjamin Arbour—in spite of the engrossing nature of the topic—had wandered somewhere else.

“Doubtless, Madam,” he interposed, with an offended air, “you know your own affairs best, and perhaps after all, I have been only officious in meddling with them; but I do think some little outward respect, some semblance of attention, is due——”

“Dear good Brother Ingram,” cried poor Mrs. Arbour, clasping her hands in terror, but still with an air of distracted preoccupation, “I meant no disrespect to you, our benefactor, Heaven knows; but I thought I heard my poor dear Dicky calling for his food.”

“And is it possible,” broke forth Mr. Ingram Arbour, in a passion, “that what I have to say, Madam, upon *any* subject, can be of less consequence than your confounded canary and his chickweed!”

“Canary, brother! chickweed! why it’s my poor little Dick wanting his mamma. Don’t you hear him setting up his tiny cry!”

“Since you call my attention to it, Madam,” growled the affectionate uncle, “I am sorry to say I do. But what on earth did you give it such a name as Dick for? Luckily, we have got through all our more important business, or I do not doubt you would have left me for that little brat at any time; as he grows older he must, however, be taught to wait for his betters.—By-the-bye, Letitia,” added Mr. Ingram, as his sister-in-law was leaving the room, “since you have given me the control of your affairs, remember that that man Wilson leaves his cottage if his rent is delayed one hour beyond the 31st of next month. I’ll Emperor of Morocco him, trust me!”



CHAPTER IV.

A COMMERCIAL ACADEMY.

BROM babyhood to childhood, Dicky Arbour grew up the pet of the Rose Cottage household, and that notwithstanding what Nurse Rachel was wont to designate his “little tantrums.” He was accustomed when provoked—from the age of two till four or thereabouts—to stiffen himself out like a ramrod, cast himself backwards upon the floor, without the least regard for the shock that was thereby inflicted upon his youthful head, and, in that recumbent position, to scream like a locomotive. The best cure for this malady was found to be the giving him a very soft and comfortable pillow to lie upon, and treating him, in all respects, like an elderly invalid of irritable temperament. He would then presently get up, toddle to his mother, and, hiding his curly head in her lap, observe in smothered tones ; “ Me so torry, mammy ; me dood now : me won’t do it never no more : me won’t indeed.”

Everybody said—save Sister Maria, who merely observed that he wanted whipping, and Brother Johnnie, who never expressed an opinion upon any subject unconnected with himself—that Dicky was a charming child, and only required a little management. Doctor Babbicombe in particular—who had been pressed into being his godpapa, since the vein of natural and kindred

sponsors had long been exhausted in the Arbour family —took vast delight in him, and taught him many things which his mother would scarcely have thought of. From his dictation, the infant pupil learned to express astonishment and admiration in such terms as, “Oh my doodney !” (for, Oh my goodness !), “Idn’t it dolly ?” for, Isn’t it jolly ? and, “Here’s a bessie dark, upon my orror !” (for, Here’s a blessed lark, upon my honour !) At which lisping wickedness, mamma would hold up her finger reprovingly, and look supernaturally solemn, till the offending party destroyed her gravity by recommending Doctor Babbicombe for corporal punishment instead of himself. “Ip my naughty godpa, mammy ; don’t ip me.”

In due course arrived that dark hour, inevitable as it seems, to civilised childhood, when the government of love is superseded by that of fear, and home and friends are left for school and strangers. Dick—whose knowledge of foreign languages had been confined to a little French, laid on upon him so lovingly and lightly by Sister Maggie, that it was rather like French polish—was not sent to the same seminary where Adolphus had had *his* mind ennobled and refined by the rudiments of classical literature, but to the commercial academy of Messrs. Dot and Carriwun, of which Johnnie had been already an alumnus for several years. In establishments of the former class, the *As in præsenti* is perhaps the most hateful task that is imposed upon a reasonable boy, while in those of the latter the abominable rule called *Practice* distracts the youthful mind most painfully. Well sings the Poet of Educational Life :

Multiplication is vexation ;
Addition is as bad—

for although the second statement is an exaggerated one,

it is obviously only introduced with an eye to the final line, wherein lies the whole gist of the stanza :

The Rule of Three does puzzle me ;
But Practice *drives me mad* !

It almost drove poor Dick mad, and certainly set him violently against the profession to which such a stumbling-block was declared to be a necessary step. He would sit and suck the sponge which was attached like a horrid parasite to every slate, for hours, dreaming of his mother or foot-ball, until the cane of the wrathful pedagogue would awaken him to the real miseries of his situation—to life and aliquot parts. This “Practice”—which never made Dick perfect—is certainly worse than the *As in presenti*, which there is no absolute necessity to understand at all. The scratch and spurt of pens, too, that pervade the school-room devoted to the more liberal studies are far less offensive, than that perpetual grind of the slate-pencils, which, greasy with tears and perspiration, have to be sharpened with the knife continually, an operation which they resent with hideous screeches. There was another method of doing this which Dick much preferred, since it was an excuse for leaving his work—retiring from Practice—and approaching the fire in cold weather : he would spit upon the end of his pencil and grind it upon the hearthstone with much persistency, until it acquired the finest possible point : when it would break off suddenly, and then he would begin again.

What noises, what smells, what an atmosphere filled that entrance-chamber of Commercial Learning, and what a splendid vision to many young minds must have been the Junior Clerk’s office that would one day receive them into its bosom, where the pedagogue ceases from

troubling, and the lazy read their newspapers, for ever, over pots of half and half!

Viewed from a mercantile point of view, Richard Arbour was rather a lazy boy, it must be confessed ; but beheld from the loftier elevation of Muscular Christianity, he was diligent and assiduous in a very high degree. If the playtime of boys—as is the modern faith—is of equal consequence with their school-time, there was certainly nobody who made a more profitable use of his than Dick. He was the most distinguished foot-ball player, for his height and weight, in the establishment, and the most dreaded by the foe ; for, as in medieval warfare, the very noblest knights in armour of purest gold were liable to be miserably discomfited by half-naked wretches who would creep under their horses' bellies and stab them, so the tallest of his opponents were not seldom hurled to earth by this pigmy inserting himself between their legs. Moreover, as the aforesaid *canaille* perilled life and limb (although, because they were not high-born, the snobbish chroniclers of the time make light of that circumstance) at least as much as the mailed knights, so Dicky Arbour would recklessly cast himself down, like some Juggernaut devotee, between the ball and any Titanic foe who was about to take a good high kick at it, and receive the iron compliment in his own ribs. This is a species of devotion rarely appreciated except by one's own side. “The ranks of Tuscany”—for school-boys are not a generous-hearted race by any means—not only “forbear to cheer” such acts, but sometimes cherish an ignoble spite against the heroic little Roman.

Thus, Mr. William Dempsey, a young man of seventeen, and the captain, upon a certain occasion, of the opposite party, took it very ill that he was not only balked of his kick, but toppled headlong all his five feet

eleven of length by the intrepid and horizontal Dick. When the battle was over, and nothing beyond a little brown paper and vinegar ought to have been required by a magnanimous foe, the heart of Dempsey desired vengeance, and his hand (in a quiet way, and with no reference to football, of course) was not slow to take it upon the very first opportunity. This tyrannical conduct was resented by poor Dick, by deeds, which, measured by the indignant feelings of the doer, were tremendous, but which, physically considered, did not much hurt Dempsey, and only provoked further cruelties ; and by words of the most outrageous character, which were overheard (easily enough — for Dick had the best of lungs) by the schoolmaster, and procured him a sound caning. This second wrong (as Dick considered it) smote the victim in a more sensitive part than that on which the mere blows had descended. The unfortunate lad had not a logical mind—as we have seen in his difficulty of dealing with aliquot parts—and was, moreover, too amply provided with the savage instinct called Sense of Justice, which, in the case of No. 5 of a poor family, is not a gift which a good-natured fairy would bring to a baptism. It seemed to him, because Mr. Carriwun had caned him for swearing without inquiry into the previous circumstances, which were such as to have made a saint swear, as poor Dick thought—who knew less about saints than if he had been brought up at Eton, where they are greatly revered, and produce half-holidays—that authority was arrayed upon the side of tyranny, and perhaps even that it was only another name for it. Mr. Carriwun imagined that he was caning bad words out of the lad, when he was in reality caning bad thoughts *into* him. We do not say that he should *not* have caned him—it was bitterly cold weather, and

even a schoolmaster must needs warm himself when the opportunity offers—but that he should have done something else as well. The matter being unexplained, Dick Arbour became a bad boy in the eyes of the master, while his resentful conduct against the Titan Dempsey earned him a reputation, scarce less unenviable, for “bumptiousness” among the boys. His impatience of a tyranny under which they had all of them suffered, more or less, without complaint, was naturally distasteful; village Hampdens are rarely popular; and to be so, it is above all things necessary that they shall be successful and uncaned.

Matters being in this unfavourable position, a match at snow-balling between one-half of the school against the other half, with Dempsey commanding the opposite faction, was the very thing for Dick to enter into with ardour. For us, who are getting on in years, and who wear spectacles, there is, however, scarcely a more repulsive amusement: next to being inadvertently launched upon a slide on the foot-pavement, and beholding, as our legs are leaving us in different directions, a crowd of miscreants bearing down upon us with a hideous velocity, there is nothing more objectionable than to find ourselves in a snow-ball scrimmage. The extreme hardness of the missiles themselves is one consideration; but that is trifling (in the eyes of a philosopher), compared to the exhibition of vindictive passion which accompanies their flight: the visage of each combatant betrays a wish that he were casting Greek fire or Armstrong shells instead of snow, and seems to grudge every moment that is spent in the manufacture of his diabolical weapon. We have seen one of such savages so maddened by the artificial avalanche, as to rush upon a small boy who had had nothing whatever to do with it, and rub a handful of

snow into the back of his neck with an energy which, if it had been frost-bitten, would have been benevolence itself. Not a few dogs—whose characteristic, as the poet tells us, is delight in strife—are similarly stirred to the depths of their brutal nature by snow, and will roll and growl in it, with evident regret that the formation of their fore-paws forbids their using it as an engine of destruction. It is probable, if certain theories be true, that these animals may have once been school-boys, who have perished in their early youth in a snow-scrim-mage.

“They’ve been and broken my nose,” cried Johnnie Arbour on a sudden, exhibiting that feature to his brother in a flattened condition, and with a perceptible dint where the snow-shell had exploded and burst in all directions over his face, like the radiations of a broken window: “they’ve broken my nose, Dick, and I am sure they’re putting stones in their snow-balls.”

“The devil they are!” cried Dick, whose caning had not cured him of strong language—“then two can play at that game, Johnnie; so here goes.”

The brothers threw together.

A great cry immediately arose from the opposite ranks. A scanty mizzle succeeded to the storm of snow-balls, and then altogether ceased. General William Dempsey had fallen backwards, as falls on Mount Avernus the thunder-smitten oak, and a crowd gathered around him, exclaiming: “Dempsey’s eye’s out!” “Dempsey’s blinded with a stone!” “Dempsey’s dead!”

Johnnie Arbour turned as white as his shirt-collar—and indeed whiter, for the occurrence happened upon a Saturday—“I threw no stone, Dick,” said he.

Dick lost his colour too, as he replied: “I’m very sorry, I’m sure, but I didn’t aim at him in particular.”

"Who put a stone into his snow-ball?" cried the captain of Richard's side.

"I did," responded the lad sturdily; "the fellows upon Dempsey's side began it though."

An indignant hiss broke forth from those about the injured youth, and especially from such as had been guilty of the practice complained of. The rest were naturally angry that poor Dempsey should have been even alluded to by young Bumptious, at such a time. He had been often heard to vow that he would be even with Dempsey, and he had now, it was evident, taken advantage of a public scrimmage to avenge a private wrong. Even those of his own side who were yet about him, fell away from him; and presently, Brother Johnnie, after a few moments of vacillation, hung his head down, and slunk away, leaving poor Dick standing alone.

There was much hardship, and wrong, and sorrow lying between Richard Arbour and that rest which at last befalleth the most weary of us; but perhaps he was not doomed to experience a moment so intensely wretched as that present one, when friend and brother had forsaken him, and he stood alone in the playground of Messrs. Dot and Carriwun—the Black Sheep of that youthful fold.





CHAPTER V

A COOL RECEPTION.

Thad long been customary with Mr. Ingram Arbour, since his brother's death, to leave Golden Square upon Friday afternoons for the cottage by the river, where he would remain till Monday morning, when the earliest train from the neighbouring town would convey him back refreshed to the haunts of commerce. On these occasions, his nephew, Adolphus, would accompany him, except when business of any pressing nature detained him in the City; and upon the Saturday evening we have in our mind, these two gentlemen were sitting in the widow's drawing-room with the rest of the family circle, exclusive of Johnnie and Dick, who were at school. Thirteen years or so had passed over them since we first made their acquaintance, bringing change to each, although in different measure. The lines upon the merchant's brow were now as numerous again, as though they were ruled for double entry, and although his eyes lacked nothing yet of their stern determination, the "hateful crow" had set its footmarks round them. Mrs. Benjamin Arbour had suffered a severer change than he. Time, which had spared to mark her still smooth brow, had frosted her brown hair, and driven the lifeblood from her cheeks, and weighed her eyelids down; they seemed to droop as

those of some traveller in the snow, to whom Death whispers, mocking the sweet tones of Sleep. Her gentle voice was weary; her smiles were rare and faint, and died away as swift as dip of oar from face of river. Except for the girl beside her, almost a woman now—golden-haired, angel-featured Maggie—standing beside her mother's chair, and as though that was not near enough, nor gave sufficient assurance of her protecting love, with one arm round her neck, and one lily hand clasped in hers so tenderly—except for her little Maggie, the mother must have died. “My sister-in-law,” Mr. Ingram Arbour would sometimes remark to common friends, “is just like one of those creepers which require a stick to hold on to life by, and can't stand up of themselves.” To which Mrs. Arbour might have retorted—if the poor lady had had such a thing as a retort left in her by this time, which was not the case—that her brother-in-law was one of those peculiar sticks which no creeper can ever be trained to cling to, although some few may submit to be bound to them by the bias of self-interest.

Adolphus, too, whose mouth had increased with his years till it almost sought for refuge in the sandy tracts of his whiskers, entertained but a poor opinion of his mother, and was continually wondering to himself from whom his own exceeding sagacity could have been inherited; while Maria, who had taken the whole household management out of the widow's hands, was for ever contrasting the improved state of domestic affairs with that of the old régime under her predecessor. The relationship of that person to herself could have been scarcely unknown to her, but so completely were her private feelings under control, and so paramount was her sense of truth and duty, that, hearing her inveigh against the extravagance, weakness, and even the irreligion of a

certain late head of a family, you would never have guessed that she was speaking all the time of her own mother. She it was to whom the discovery was due that the maids were sluggards in winter, and who caused her bed-room fire to be lit by half-past six A.M., in order that one of them, at least, should not lie too long. Yellow-skinned Maria was of a snaky temperament, and wanted a good deal of warming, but she was likely to be cold enough—as Dr. Babbicombe once observed of her, with no less force than freedom—if her caloric depended upon her being taken to anybody's bosom. Indeed how Adolphus and she ever managed to keep up an alliance, as they did (offensive in every sense), is a great mystery, since there was scarce half a trowelful of social cement of any sort between them. He certainly did not sympathise with her doubling the customary length of the evening devotions, which in the exercise of her domestic supremacy, she had seen it right to do. That young man always knelt down with his face well over the newspaper, while his sister, the priestess, delivered her denunciations as if she enjoyed them, and even rasped out the benedictions themselves as though they were steel filings. Uncle Ingram's devotional attitude was the leaning back on his armchair as far as he could go, with his hands clasped upon his lap, and his legs crossed one over the other; while, doubtless to conceal the force of his penitential emotions, his pocket-handkerchief was modestly cast over his head and face.

Maggie and her mother knelt together with their heads over one cushion; and the two maids were stationed as far from the rest of the household as the limits of the little drawing-room would permit, between the windows, and in a thorough draught. Nevertheless, woe to Jane or Rachel if a cough from either of them should inter-

rupt their spiritual pastoress ; while it would have been positively "as much as her place was worth," had either of them blown her nose.

Imagine, therefore, the scene that ensued upon the evening of which we write, when, immediately after the commencement of prayers, the back-door bell was heard to tinkle with a sort of guilty indecision. Miss Maria read on as though there were nothing audible beyond the breathing of Uncle Ingram, which always began to be stertorous coincidently with the commencement of family devotions ; but she had more than a suspicion that it was the baker's young man coming surreptitiously after Jane, and she took one eye off the sacred page, and set it to watch the behaviour of that unfortunate domestic. Again the bell sounded through the house—this time with a more decided intention of making itself heard — and Jane turned round imploringly to entreat permission to answer it, with a face like a tomato, from confusion ; but upon meeting the sentinel eye with a decidedly forbidding expression in it, returned, more like a Jerusalem artichoke in hue, to her cane-bottomed chair. A third time the back-door bell-sounded, and pulled upon this occasion by so impatient a hand, that you could hear the wire rattle, and the bell-metal beat against the skirting-board.

"Why the devil don't somebody answer that bell ?" broke forth Uncle Ingram, awakened by the tumult, and not being able to call to mind, upon the instant, the nature of the occupation in which he was supposed to have been engaged. Jane rushed out of the room at a permissive signal from Miss Maria, while the rest of the household awaited, in positions half expectant, half devout, whatever catastrophe chanced to be impending. They heard the lock turned, and the chain unfastened,

and a “Lor’ bless me !” from the absent cook ; then the door was banged to by another hand, a hasty step came along the passage, and there presented himself—Master Dick !

“ You young scoundrel,” roared Uncle Ingram, “ what do you mean by breaking in here like a burglar at such a time as this ? ”

“ He has run away from school,” suggested Mr. Adolphus Arbour, maliciously.

“ We are at *prayers*, Sir,” emphasised Miss Maria, looking like Torquemada in petticoats.

“ What is the matter, love ? ” cried Maggie tenderly, running up to the haggard-looking lad.

“ I am expelled, dear mother,” exclaimed he, in a miserable voice. “ I’ve cut Bill Dempsey’s eye out with a snow-ball, though I’m sure I didn’t mean it. They expelled me, and so I thought I’d come away at once.”

“ You young ruffian ! ” exclaimed Uncle Ingram.

“ He’ll come to be hung ! ” observed Adolphus reflectively.

“ And then the devil will get him,” added Maria, with the air of one who foresees the future without dissatisfaction.

“ Mother, won’t you speak to me ? ” asked the wretched boy. I don’t care for what *these* say ; but do, pray speak to me.”

“ You don’t care for your eldest brother, then ? ” demanded Maria, severely.

“ No ; nor for you either,” responded Dick, bestowing one fiery glance upon his interlocutor, and then fixing as before, his appealing eyes upon his mother only. *

“ You don’t care for your Uncle Ingram, then ? ” remarked the crafty Adolphus.

“ Come to mamma,” interposed Maggie, judiciously ;

"I am sure she will never condemn you without a hearing."

Mrs. Arbour was sitting in her chair with her hands before her weeping eyes, and was glad enough to bury her face in the boy's curls as he knelt down before her.

"Hush, Dicky, dear, don't sob, don't sob," she whispered; "I don't believe you are so bad as they make out."

"I did not mean to cut Bill Dempsey's eye out," murmured Dick, hysterically; "but they all believe I did."

"It doesn't signify what you meant, you little blackguard, if you *did* it," observed Uncle Ingram, taking his usual practical view of things. "It's my belief your mother will be your ruin. Letitia, what does the Bible recommend us to do with boys like these?"

"Whip 'em," observed Maria, with conciseness, and in order that the advice might not be lost in Eastern metaphor.

"I *have* been whipped," cried the lad, lifting up his head. "Mr. Carriwun beat me till his cane frayed out at the edges."

"Not enough, Sir," returned the implacable Maria. "If I were your mother——"

"Yes, but you aint," interrupted the victim sharply; "you're nobody's mother, Miss, and Doctor Babbicombe says that you're never likely to be anybody's either. Don't you go bullying me, now, or I'll begin saying things, mind you."

The lad's whole body trembled with passion in every fibre; his eyes darted fire as he spoke, and there seemed to be every probability of his "saying things," and of a very disagreeable character too; when, at a sign from Uncle Ingram, Adolphus picked Dick up, and tearing

him with not a little violence out of his mother's arms, carried him out of the room.

Then there was a total silence, presently broken by "thuds"—blows struck with a stick against an unresounding body—from a neighbouring apartment, but not one cry.

"I cause it to be done for his own good, Letitia, and for *your* good," observed Uncle Ingram, in explanation, and with composure, but keeping his eyes averted from the object of his benevolence nevertheless.

"Mamma has fainted!" cried Maggie with a piercing shriek. "Tell Adolphus to stop—somebody. You'll kill her amongst you, at last, I do believe."

"Good Heavens!" cried Uncle Ingram, frightened out of his wits by an occurrence so entirely out of his own experience, "why doesn't the fool stop? Run, Maria."

Maria did not stir; but Rachel ran into the dining-room straightway, and almost upset Mr. Adolphus, who was coming out with a face whiter than usual.

"I want a poultice," observed he to the astonished domestic; and indeed he did, for Master Dick—whose hands he had taken the precaution of securing—had made his teeth meet in the fleshy part of his corrector's thumb.





CHAPTER VI.

FALSELY ACCUSED.

HE next day being Sunday, was passed, by Maria's directions, in total silence as regarded the events of the preceding evening. It was to be "a day of rest for *all*," observed that young lady with an air of charity; and it was occupied by herself and faction in contriving severities applicable to Master Richard's case upon the morrow. To Dick it was rather a day of suspense than rest, which are not identical things by any means; and to his mother, it was twenty-four long hours of agony. This lady had obtained Uncle Ingram's protection for her offspring at a considerable sacrifice. She had never had much of that female peculiarity popularly, or unpopularly, known as "a will of her own," for the deceased Benjamin had given way to all her gentle wishes in small concerns, while in important matters the two always lovingly agreed; and now, finding herself crossed and denied upon all occasions under the new dynasty, she had for many years ceased to express her feelings in public, and only now and then lightened her breaking heart to Maggie, who slept in the same chamber. She had taken Richard's hand in hers under her shawl at church that day, feeling safe from reproof within that sacred building, and mother and child had thus interchanged all sorts of affectionate thoughts together, merely by the pressure of their fingers.

Maria had regarded them with lofty scorn, and on one occasion even contemplated the rapping of Dick's disengaged hand, which lacked a prayer-book, but she thought it upon the whole more prudent to resist that temptation ; so she contented herself with pitching her hymns at him (not of course her *hymn-book*), and of repeating with peculiar stress such parts of the service as might be strained to apply to an unregenerate youth of his description. Adolphus secretly trod upon his toes during the anthem, and upon his resenting that personal indignity without the like precaution, gave an appealing look to Uncle Ingram, who instantly made a note of the offence in the memorandum tablets which he always carried about with him, and used without the slightest reference to time or place.

“I’m afraid, Maggie,” whispered the widow, sobbing, when she and her younger daughter had retired to their chamber on Sunday night—“I am afraid that they will send our poor dear Richard to sea.”

“Surely not, dear mother,” answered Maggie quickly ; “he is but a child, you know ; and besides, they will not dare to do it unless you give consent.”

Mrs. Benjamin Arbour sighed ; if she had not had a little speck of pride still left within her, she would probably have spoken ; but Maggie understood her all the same.

“Why, what has our Dick done, mother, beyond his being a little mischievous and unruly ? He does not treat Maria and Adolphus respectfully, it is true, but they on their parts are very far from kind to him. This snow-ball business is a very sad one, of course, but it is not clear that he is to blame, or even certain that he did the mischief.”

“Bless you, my dear Maggie,” returned her mother,

“for saying what all day long my heart has yearned to say, and dared not; but you see, my child, your Uncle Ingram is so hard and stern, and your brother and sister——”

“Nay, mamma,” interrupted the young girl gently; “you surely know far better than *they* what is good for Richard: and as for Uncle Ingram, he means us all well enough, I’m sure. If you will let me speak to him—in your name, as it were, for, in your present state of health, such an excitement would be——”

“No, Maggie, no,” cried the poor lady, “I must shrink from nothing for Dick’s sake, and for the sake of him who left him in my charge. Uncle Ingram may take all away except my boy, but he must leave me him—he must leave me Richard. Oh, child, you know not how his baby-face once comforted me, when Death was in this room, and misery everywhere. He shall never, never, never go to sea.”

We are aware that an apology is due, on the part of this poor lady, for the display of such an unreasonable abhorrence of the maritime profession. It is probable that her thoughts were not directed towards Her Majesty’s navy, or even to those celebrated *A1* vessels in the proprietorship of Messrs. Green and others; she merely looked upon the sea as a huge separator between herself and him committed to it, and her view was, so far, a correct one.

“Mother, mother dearest,” replied Maggie, “if you will allow me to go down alone to-morrow morning, I promise you that what you fear shall not take place; and if there is any chance of its taking place, that you shall be sent for. Will you not trust me, mother? Promise me that you will not rise to-morrow, or, at least, not come down stairs.”

Good Maggie, cunning Maggie, serpent and dove in one, that was well said. Mrs. Arbour wisely assented to be more unwell than usual upon the morrow. When tyrants rule, there is no resource for us but dissimulation.

Accordingly, upon the next morning, the arm-chair—symbol of empty state—that stood beside the tea-maker, was vacant, and the company was quietly informed by Maggie that mamma was not coming down. The whole armoury of offensive weapons, therefore, which had been stacked in more than one bosom, in readiness for the expected discussion, became at once next to valueless—old stores to be parted with at enormous sacrifice, even if they found any market at all.

Yellow Maria slipped from the apartment, and came back purple.

“What is the meaning of this, Margaret? I can’t get into mamma’s room.”

“No, dear,” replied that young lady with great sweetness, “she is not well this morning, and must not be disturbed. I locked her door myself, and have got the key. Dr. Babbicombe says it is not good for her to be made to faint.”

“I don’t understand your language, Margaret,” quoth Maria with asperity. “Who makes her faint, I should like to know?”

“Adolphus did it on Saturday,” returned Maggie, with the quiet air of a narrator of facts; “but nobody will do it to-day, at all events.”

“Look where he bit my thumb!” observed Adolphus, apologetically, and exhibiting the injured digit.

“You had better keep it covered up,” remarked Maggie, drily; “the air will only make it worse; and besides, it isn’t pretty to look at.” This young lady was a lamb in all matters that concerned herself, but now that

she had mother and brother to defend, she was a lioness with cubs.

Adolphus and Maria quailed before her, and the more so because they knew that Uncle Ingram loved her. Under her protecting wing, Master Dick dipped largely into the muffin dépôt intended for his seniors. Mr. Ingram Arbour's countenance exhibited an indecision not becoming to it. "I don't understand this, Margaret," quoth he at last; "to hear you talk, one would imagine that this boy had deserved no punishment at all. He has actually cut another boy's eye out—a most respectable lad."

"Son of the banker," interpolated Adolphus, in a tone adapted to the description of a sacrilege.

"I didn't mean to do it," retorted Dick with indignation, and his mouth indecorously full.

"Hold *your* tongue, Sir," observed Miss Maria solmenly.

"I shan't," responded Dick with improved distinctness.

"Silence, Dick; please to be quiet," said Maggie. And Dick became as mute as a fish.

"It may have been quite an accident, uncle, as he asserts," continued the peace-maker; "nor is it even fully proved that he did it at all."

"All the boys say he had a grudge against Dempsey and threw at him on purpose," observed Adolphus.

"It is not unusual for some persons to believe the worst of their fellow-creatures."

"But Johnnie says so himself, and he's his brother," retorted Adolphus.

"His *brother!*!" repeated Maggie scornfully, without further rejoinder; but a less sagacious man than Uncle Ingram could have read in her flashing eyes the rest of her reply.

“Yes,” answered he, “there is certainly a bad feeling, Adolphus, between you and Richard. There is something in what Margaret says, after all. I do not think I should be quite justified in sending him——”

Maria held her finger up forbiddingly; it was for a single instant only, but Maggie caught its reflection in the mirror opposite, and turned upon her instantly, as the faithful sheep-dog on the wolf. “No, Maria, he is not to be sent to sea. His mother told me to say that much. Not to sea.”

“She must have been listening,” said Maria to herself, “when I and Uncle Ingram talked it over in the dining-room last night. How careless it was of me not to have thought of looking into the china-closet first, as I generally do!”

“I have made up my mind to give him another chance,” said Mr. Ingram Arbour; “although I much doubt whether he deserves it. I shall put him at once into my own office, in some capacity where he will be pretty sharply looked after. You know your arithmetic pretty well, I suppose, Mister?”

The thought of Practice flitted momentarily over poor Dick’s mind, casting a bat-like shadow; but he answered, “Yes, uncle,” with tolerable cheerfulness.

“Then that’s arranged,” quoth his new proprietor decisively; “and you will pack up at once, and accompany your brother and me by the midday train to town.”

“Not to-day, uncle,” replied Dick with firmness, although he looked terribly frightened. “I will go tomorrow, but not to-day.”

“You—will—not—go!” exclaimed the merchant with awful distinctness and solemnity. “Did I understand you to say, Sir, that you—will—not—go?”

This recalcitrancy, so far exceeding the hopeful ex-

pectations of his eldest brother and sister, struck those worthies dumb; even Maggie could but whisper, "Richard, Richard, you will ruin yourself, in spite of all that can be done for you!"

"I must see William Dempsey before I go," explained the lad, hanging down his head, and blushing.

"Little hypocrite!" ejaculated Maria.

"It's my belief, he wants to put his other eye out," observed Adolphus.

"*May* I go, please, uncle?" reiterated the boy appealingly, and without taking any notice of these aspersions.

"Please to let him go," pleaded Maggie, taking the merchant's not unwilling hand in hers.

"I *must* be at my office this afternoon," ejaculated that gentleman with decision.

"He shall go by himself, to-morrow, by the very first train," urged Margaret.

"I can't trust him," thundered Uncle Ingram; "it's the mail-train, and he will rob the post-bags. At all events, he would not come to work, I'm sure."

"Adolphus can stay behind, and go with him, uncle."

"Very well, then, so let it be. But mind, young Sir, you do not get another holiday for six months to come."

Mrs. Arbour was glad enough that matters had turned out no worse for Master Richard, but yet could hardly spare him out of her sight even to pay this praiseworthy visit to his injured school-fellow. He found Mr. William Dempsey at his father's house, and in a darkened chamber, in a frame of mind very different from that for which he had been hitherto distinguished. The lad had come prepared for reproach and upbraiding, not for the quiet hush of a sick-room, and the forgiveness of one who felt

himself stricken for his evil deserts. A terrible misfortune was overhanging and likely to fall upon the poor young man ; the sight of his other eye was threatened, nor did the doctors give much hope that total blindness could be averted.

Richard received this news with a burst of tears.

“ I shall never bully anybody any more,” said Dempsey, smiling faintly, and feeling about for his enemy’s hand.

“ Don’t take it, Dempsey,” cried the other in an agony ; “ I wish from my heart that it had been cut off long ago ! But you don’t, you can’t believe I did it on purpose. Pray, pray say that.”

“ You never meant to do me any such harm as this,” answered the poor fellow ; “ of that I am quite certain, Dick.”

“ No, nor any harm, upon my soul. I did not throw at *you*, Dempsey. I told my mother so at church, yesterday, and I wouldn’t tell her a lie there, I wouldn’t, indeed. I put the stone in because your side were doing it.”

“ It wasn’t a stone,” replied the sufferer peevishly ; “ although it doesn’t matter now what it was. All the school knows it was a piece of bottle-glass ; the snow-ball in which it was, was picked up close beside me with my blood upon it. I saw them—— Ah me,” broke forth the unhappy youth, “ I shall see nothing more ; I shall have to feel my way about for ever. I have laughed at blind men often and often, and it’s come to my turn now. Don’t cry for me Arbour ; I deserve it. That’s Dr. Babbicombe’s voice in the front hall ; I wonder whether he will do me any good. Why don’t you speak, Arbour ? You should always speak to a fellow that can’t see.”

“ Oh Dempsey, Dempsey,” cried the boy, in a voice so altered, that the other called from the bed to know

whether it was he indeed ; “listen to me just one moment ; I have something to say to you, Dempsey, worse than all that has happened yet ! Promise me that you will never tell, for it can do nobody good now, but only harm : and yet I must set myself right with you and Maggie.” He came close beside the pillow, and whispered : “It was not me at all, Willy. I threw a stone, I know ; but Johnnie—my brother, you know, my own brother—he threw the broken glass : I saw him making up the snow-ball with that inside !”

“The sneaking villain !” ejaculated the sick lad angrily.

“Hush, hush, Willy ; say nothing about it ; but only now you know it wasn’t me. I couldn’t help telling you that, you looked so ill and changed.”

Dick stood upon tiptoe tenderly, and kissed the poor lad’s forehead above the bandage that was round his eyes. “I am going away to London, and shall not be able to come and see you again for months.”

“Johnnie has never been to ask after me, Dick,” groaned the other bitterly ; “all the school have been except that——”

“Hush !” cried Richard ; “here is Dr. Babbicombe ; hush, for Heaven’s sake !”

The doctor looked at his quondam favourite with a very severe face : “I am glad to see you here, Richard ; although it is the least that you can do after what has happened——”

“Don’t say that, doctor,” interrupted the patient, with a touch of his old arbitrary manner ; “I won’t have Dick abused. God bless you, Dick, and forgive me all I’ve done to you.”

Richard Arbour ran home through the snow with very different feelings from those with which he had arrived

some fifteen minutes before. “I used to think Dempsey was all bad, poor fellow,” thought he ; “and though our Rachel always said that Johnnie was all for himself, and a regular Number Wunner, I never dreamed of his being such a——” and Dick shook his curly head again and again, for want of a term of sufficient reprobation.





CHAPTER VII.

DARKENDIM STREET.

FARLY next morning, Richard Arbour had taken leave of his dear mother and of Sister Maggie —to whom alone he confided the secret of his innocence in the snow-ball matter—and was upon his road with his big brother to the railway station, to which the cart containing his small supply of luggage had already been despatched. He looked back more than once, upon his way, on the little home wherein he had passed his happy child-life, with regretful eyes, and the blind of that chamber-window over the dining-room was always held aside by an unseen hand, and two unseen faces were, he well knew, being pressed there against the frosty pane. He would be a good boy, and obey his uncle, for their sake, thought he ; and waved his cap as he entered the clump of trees that shut the cottage finally from view.

“ Now, then, what are you stopping for ? ” growled Adolphus. “ None of your cunning tricks with me, my man ; you may keep them for the women-folks, I do assure you. You don’t suppose *I*’m going to mind about such a chap as you. Besides, *I* aint going to part with you just yet, my young shaver, so my feelings are not so overcome. You’ll be in my department in the office,

mind you, and you'd better be precious careful what you're about. Come, Sir, you've got "Runaway" written on your face, I see, so we'll just walk hand in hand if you please."

Mr. Adolphus Arbour's views upon what fraternal behaviour should be, were, as we have seen, somewhat peculiar, and his idea of what walking hand in hand implies, was not less original. It consisted in clutching hold of the cuff of Dick's greatcoat, and dragging him thereby along with him, as a folio-policeman drags a duodecimo-pickpocket. In another moment, the greatcoat was trailing in the snow, and its proprietor, having withdrawn from it as in a pantomime trick—having sloughed it as a serpent in a hurry might slough his skin—was already some twenty yards on his road home again. Equipped only in the short school-boy jacket, so excellently adapted for pedestrian exercise, as the boy was, Adolphus could never have caught him, and he knew it.

"Hi!" roared he, "you stop! Do you hear me, you young scoundrel? You stop!"

Dick did hear him, and stopped accordingly, upon a heap of flints, intended for the repairing of the road; from which having selected those best adapted for his purpose, he commenced a Parthian war, now retreating from, now advancing upon, the enemy, and now, Deucalion-like, casting the stones behind him, at a venture, as he flew. Adolphus, in deadly fear of these missiles—the fate of Mr. William Dempsey occurring to him with peculiar force under the circumstances—was constrained to hold the greatcoat shield-like before his face, which of course prevented him from making anything save a blind charge upon his assailant, and compelled him to remain, upon the whole, in a condition of inglorious inaction.

“I will not take hold of you any more, Dick,” parleyed the besieged party from behind his curtain or rampart.

“I know that; thank you for nothing,” returned the enemy, dexterously smiting the kneecap of the foe with a flint.

“I won’t hurt you, I won’t bully you, I’ll be good to you,” roared the limping Adolphus.

“I *must* throw these three more stones,” replied Dick, “and then we’ll have *pax*.”

Those stones, accordingly, this master of the situation discharged, and one of them with effect; and then the two forces concluded an armistice, and reached the railway station only just in time. Adolphus took advantage of the hurry to furnish Dick with a half-price ticket instead of a whole one, pocketing the surplus fare with which his uncle had intrusted him, and laying the burden of the imposture upon Richard himself, who was more than thirteen years of age, and looked fifteen. The latter never dreamed but that this was done by his uncle’s orders, and received the reproofs and expostulations of the ticket-viewers all the way to London with a magnanimity which is only born of a sense of duty. His thoughts were mainly fixed upon that metropolis, so wondrous and vaguely promising to the soul of youth, from the days of another Dick—who was the scapegrace of *his* family also—even until now, and on the new manner of life upon which he was about to enter. His ideas of the mercantile profession—despite his residence at Messrs. Dot and Carriwun’s—were principally derived from the information afforded by the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, which led him to believe that sales were effected by means of purses of gold coin, and that the chief article of commerce consisted of precious stones—some of which perhaps, being rubbed smartly, might

produce attendant genii. He made a pretty good guess, however, in concluding that his future Old Man of the Sea would be no other than the individual now opposite to him, over whose countenance, whenever he had occasion to rub his kneecap—which was rather frequently—there passed a decidedly malevolent expression. As to Uncle Ingram, there had certainly been nothing about him, identical with those splendid personages who were wont to purchase a thousand bales of silk at Balsora or to furnish Haroun Al Raschid with those young ladies of surpassing beauty, so full of reminiscences of the king their father, and their august mode of life at home. But then Dick felt that Uncle Ingram in the country might be a very different man from Uncle Ingram among his wares—for business matters were never referred to at the cottage, except in such tones as befitted their sacred and mysterious character—and he did not altogether despair of finding that relative sitting cross-legged under a dome of great magnificence, and selling diamonds in sacks by dry measure.

As a matter of fact, however, Mr. Ingram Arbour was a china and earthenware dealer, and sold dinner-services, jugs, basins, and so on, by the ton, in Darkendim Street, City. He was a sort of commercial Pandarus, a go-between 'twixt the manufacturers and retail dealers ; and, if he had not been a Londoner, would perhaps have been called a Manchester warehouseman. The Darkendim Street establishment, although of vast extent, was very ill lighted, and had rather the air of being underground than otherwise. The two brothers went direct to this emporium, and threaded their way among mighty crates, with musty hay peering through their ribs as if from a manger, to the sanctum of Mr. Ingram Arbour, which was like one of those boxes, and not much larger,

in which private watchmen keep guard at night over banks and other buildings, wherein it is essential to persuade the public that there is money lodged. Uncle Ingram held out a finger to his little nephew, by way of welcome to commercial life; and Dick, having taken hold of it respectfully, bent it slightly—for he found it impossible to shake it—and returned it to its proprietor.

“ You had better take him to Mr. Mickleham, Adolphus, for the present, and he will set him to work at once. And mind you’re a good boy, Sir, from henceforth —d’ye hear?—and whatever you do, don’t throw my china about into people’s eyes.”

With which not very encouraging remark, Uncle Ingram turned to the newspaper that was lying above his ledger, as it sometimes does, I have observed, with even the best of business men, and Dick and his conductor, like Dante and his guide in another place, resumed their way through the gloom. This time, however, they ascended a flight of stairs, and returned across another floor to a room which overlooked the narrow street. A benevolent-looking old gentleman, with gold spectacles and slightly bald, sat at a huge desk with an enormous book before him, lisping, with his mouth almost shut, not in numbers, but in figures, to himself. It struck Dick that he must have been always doing this, and wondered within himself whether it could have been this very individual who had invented “Practice” for the confusion of youth. So soon as he spoke, however, it was evident that he was far too good-natured a person to have done anything of the sort.

“ Good-day, Mr. Adolphus,” cried he in a cheery voice; “ and is this your brother Dick come to be lord mayor of London, and I don’t know what beside? Let us shake hands, my good young Sir.”

Mr. Mickleham descended cautiously from his perch, by help of a cross-bar let into the legs of his lofty stool for that very purpose, and gave Dick a hearty welcome. “I think,” continued he, as the little fellow squeezed the friendly hand as tightly as he could, “we shall get on very well together, we two.”

“If you do,” observed Adolphus grimly, “you’ll be about the first that has done it with that young gentleman.”

“Pooh, pooh, pooh—hush, hush!” cried the old man; “I know nothing of all that, and I won’t hear anything about it. When such little lads as these get into trouble, there are always faults on both sides.”

“Well, well,” returned Adolphus, “time will show; only, if I am not very much out in my calculations—”

“That’s just what you’re making me be,” interposed the old gentleman. “If the lad is to be under my care for awhile, I cannot be distracted by anything else, if you please. I shall have to begin again with Cockspur and Triangle’s account, as it is.”

The heir-presumptive of the house walked off with a grating laugh, and left the old man and the boy together. Mr. Mickleham looked at Dick without speaking, until the echoes of the departing footsteps had died away; then he drew him nearer to the light, and patted his curly locks approvingly. “Richard—your name is Richard, isn’t it?—Richard, my boy,” said he in a tender tone, “do you understand book-keeping?”

Dick modestly replied that he was afraid he was not very good at it.

“Have you ever heard of Böttcher, Richard—of the great Böttcher?”

Dick rather thought that he had heard the name (or something very like it) before.

“Of course you have,” replied the old gentleman with

enthusiasm: "who has not heard of the famous Böttcher? Who does not feel regret that such a genius was not our own fellow-countryman?"

"Ah, who indeed!" murmured poor Dick, who felt that he was getting credit somehow for knowing something or other of which he was profoundly ignorant.

"Here," continued the old man, delighted at finding a willing listener, if not a sympathiser with his particular hobby—"here is a piece of Meissen porcelain that has once been in the great Böttcher's own fingers. You remember, doubtless, how the idea of making the white porcelain was suggested to him by the hair-powder which his valet put on his wig: how precious became the earth from which it was made, and how it was forbidden to be exported, and was brought into the manufactory in sealed barrels by persons sworn to secrecy. The whole history of pottery can be read in those shelves yonder, Richard." He pointed to innumerable specimens of porcelain and earthenware arranged like pictures upon the wall, and carefully classified. "This is the pattern-room, and in these drawers are hundreds of specimens of the modern ware; but those are the ancient gems, the priceless treasures." With as great a reverence as Ultramontanist ever paid to relic, he took down a misshapen and black brown something out of a sort of iron net on the extreme left of the line of shelves, and exclaimed with an air of triumph: "Now what do you think of this, Richard?"

"It's very ugly, isn't it, please, Sir?" said Dick, determined to speak plainly this time, and not to be misunderstood again.

"Ugly!" cried Mr. Mickleham in a tone of the most undisguised horror. "Why, I begin to think that what has been said of you must be true. Ugly! Why, you

young reprobate, this was found in a tomb at Thebes, and must have been manufactured nearly fifteen hundred years before the Christian era. It was made, perhaps, by the very father of the art. Ugly! Why what on earth were those bright eyes given you for?"

"I beg your pardon, Sir," replied Dick with sincere contrition; "I really am no judge at all. I'm only thirteen years old, although I look so tall. I dare say it is a very pretty jug indeed."

"Jug!" echoed Mr. Mickleham with a shriek; "it's a bottle, Sir; a bottle of Chinese stoneware. Here is a sun-dried brick from Babylon, with a cuneiform inscription on it, telling us that it was made at the establishment of the Messrs. Cockspur and Triangle of that epoch. That straw and clay, Sir, were put together three thousand years ago. Here, again, is a clay-book from the private library of Sennacherib, and contains the inventory of the furniture of his palace. Descending to modern times, here is a beautiful rustic figure from the hands of Bernard Palissy himself, he who, being unable to pay his assistant his wages, gave him the coat off his own back, and after sixteen years of poverty-stricken existence, triumphed. This rose-coloured Sèvres Cupid was made for the famous Madame Dubarry, whose exquisite taste in porcelain must not, however, be permitted to blind us to the impropriety of her behaviour; she was as frail as her pink china. This splendid vase was one of a set purchased by Augustus III. at the price of a whole regiment of dragoons, and to my mind was worth a squadron; while this tea-cup, made by Charles III. of Nor—Goodness Heavens! look, boy! you have younger sight than I: can this, by any possibility, be a crack in the handle? Come here; I would not venture to take it off its nail for half the treasures of Dresden."

"It's only a cobweb, Sir," observed Dick, examining it; "just let me blow it away."

"Not for your life, boy, not for your life!" exclaimed Mr. Mickleham in unaffected terror. "Oh, the rashness and foolhardiness of youth! Just run your eye over this account for me, and tell me what you make it. What a turn you have given me, lad; I shan't be fit for work for the next half hour. There's the bell going for the workmen's dinner, luckily, so I can conscientiously devote the interval to luncheon." The old gentleman opened a cupboard, and produced some sherry and biscuits. "You must be hungry, lad, after being in the country-air this morning. I remember it gave me a tremendous appetite the last time I was in it—between thirteen and fourteen years ago."

"Do you stop in this place all the year round, Sir?" inquired the lad with astonishment.

"Pretty much," returned the old gentleman, laughing. "I very rarely go far away, at all events; and don't you think it's a very nice place too?"

"I like this room, Sir, and I like you," answered Dick; "but I don't like Darkendim Street, nor that smell of old straw down stairs."

"Smell of old straw!" replied the other. "Why, what a strange boy you are. I never smell any old straw. What fancies lads do take into their giddy heads! You must dismiss all that, Richard, you know; for after a day or two, when I have seen what sort of an accountant you make, you will be put in the packing department under your Brother Adolphus. Lor' bless you, lad, you will get to like the old house in time so much that there will be no getting you away from it."

Dick thought within himself, that although he should get to be as old as the Babylon brick, this would never

happen, but he kept the reflection within his own bosom. “And now, my boy, we must not waste our time any longer ; please to add up all these several sums in that sheet yonder, and see if you can verify the amounts which I have in my desk.”

So Dick was set to work, and laboured on assiduously till four o’clock, at which hour Mr. Ingram Arbour came in with his hat on, and after having received a favourable account of his nephew’s exertions, bade him get ready, and come along with him to Golden Square. His uncle and Adolphus walked on rapidly together, and the boy trotted behind them, confused by the unaccustomed throng and din, and keeping to the heels of his unanxious relatives only with the greatest difficulty. After a most exciting run of forty minutes, diversified by perils of crossings, stupendous in Dick’s Arcadian eyes, he arrived at his new home.

Golden Square, as most people know, is not a very cheerful spot, from whatever point of view it is regarded ; but when approached from the Regent Street side, as it chanced to be in the present instance, it appears, by contrast to that thoroughfare, more especially sombre. The scanty snow, too, which still lay here and there on the spouts of the houses and on the brink of the gutters, intensified the general gloom ; and the whole impression given to poor Dick, fresh from Rose Cottage, was, that Golden Square was little better than Darkendim Street. A pretty waiting-maid opened the door, and a nice-looking, and rather stately old lady received them in the hall with a courtesy, and kissed Richard’s cheek. “Excuse the liberty, young Sir,” said she ; “but I have been a great many years in your good uncle’s house, and my heart is drawn towards those that are of his kith and kin.”

Dick returned the salute with cordiality, as became his genial nature, and was about to extend the sphere of his benevolence to the younger female, when Adolphus, touching his uncle's sleeve, drew his attention to that circumstance, and Mr. Ingram Arbour roared out: “What *are* you about, Sir?” and “How old, in the name of all the vices, *is* that boy! Take him into the house-keeper's room, Mrs. Trimming, and let him have his tea and cold meat with you—that is to say if you are not afraid of the young dog. It will never do for a child like that to be dining late every day.”

With this somewhat inconsistent speech the master of the house and his myrmidon ascended to the upper floors, and the old lady having conducted the lad into a comfortable little sitting-room below the level of the street-pavement, set before him a handsome piece of cold beef and a jug of ale; after which she surveyed him admiringly, through her silver spectacles, for the space of a minute, and then deliberately kissed him again.





CHAPTER VIII.

GOLDEN SQUARE.

FOR the first week, Richard Arbour bore his transportation to town with equanimity ; he liked Mr. Mickleham and Mrs. Trimming, and saw little of his uncle and brother. When they went down, at the end of the week, to Rose Cottage, leaving him in Golden Square, he thought it rather hard ; but the old housekeeper was so kind, and Betsy so tender, that he was not so very miserable after all. But after this exile had lasted for some ten weeks or so, and, shifted from the pattern-room to the packing department, he had been exposed day after day to the insolence and cruelty of Adolphus, he began to find life in Darkendim Street irksome indeed. Appeals to the head of the firm—who was of opinion that all complaints from inferiors against their superiors were alike frivolous and vexatious—he soon found were utterly fruitless ; and as for praise from that quarter for the things that he did well and dutifully—he might as well have looked for apricots upon a clothes-prop. Mr. Ingram Arbour, who was by no means loth to receive the harvest of a well-spent life himself from the general public, in such titles as Prudent, Well-to-do, Independent, Respectable and the like, had never been known to bestow a grain of it in the way of encour-

agement of other people. He prided himself too much upon his practical character to have any respect for the value of fair words. He had become possessed of a foolish saying against them in the connection with the buttering of parsnips, and thought himself rather a philosopher in its application. Most men who are much addicted to proverbs are mentally short-sighted, and our seller of chinaware was in that way a perfect Solomon at second-hand. "A straw will show us which way the wind blows," says the commonplace sage, and never takes into account the place where he finds the straw, and the thousand eddies wherein it is like to be whirled by currents of which he never dreams.

Uncle Ingram and Nephew Richard drifted further and further away from one another daily on the freezing sea of mutual discontent; and we may be sure that a breath from a certain quarter was not wanting to make matters worse between them.

Dick, who was a sharp lad—for all that Messrs. Dot and Carriwun thought—could unlock a ward or two of his brother's character already, and with the imprudence of his years had made Adolphus aware of this proficiency. He had been so indiscreet—in a certain altercation at the office concerning the breakage of some little Etruscan pitchers—as to remind that young man of Betsy's having boxed his ears one day, within Dick's hearing, and doubtless for provocation received; and that in a tone of voice which might have been heard in the sentry-box, had Uncle Ingram chanced to be on guard there. Adolphus smiled contemptuously upon the absurd libel at the time, but two chinamen who had been heard to giggle behind a crate, lost their situations, for misconduct, within the week, nor in the end was the disclosure a laughing matter to anybody. Mr.

Joseph Surface never likes that decent screen to be thrown down which so often stands in the corner of his apartment, whether Lady Teazle be really concealed behind it or not.

On the second Saturday that Richard was left alone in Golden Square, Mrs. Trimming entertained company. The respect which Mr. Ingram Arbour evidently had for that lady was so high, that Richard never doubted but that the dining-room was used by her that night instead of her own apartment with his full permission ; and, indeed, she looked so “superior” and “genteel” on the evening in question, that nobody would have ventured to dispute her privilege to sit wherever she pleased. She had a black silk gown on, which stood out in its own right without the aid of crinoline, like card-board ; and the lace that she wore voluminously about her was of that faded, not to say dingy complexion, which is known (very familiarly) as Old Point. The expression upon Mrs. Trimming’s features, too, was gala-like to an extraordinary degree upon this night of her reception. Dick hardly recognised the staid and stately housekeeper in the animated and joyous old lady who superintended Betsy as she set out supper upon the mighty dining-table—for three. One person only, then, was to come to supper. The boy had expected a dozen guests at least, so tremendous had been the preparations. Who could this distinguished visitor be? thought he, for the sake of whom he had been adjured to put on his Sunday clothes, and in whose honour Betsy wore as many ribbons as would have served a recruiting party—which, indeed, perhaps she was.

When all the arrangements were completed to her satisfaction, and the clock struck 9 P.M., Mrs. Trimming seated herself before the fire with her feet on the fender,

and her silk gown furled like a banner on her lap in the attitude of expectation.

“Betsy,” said she, with great distinctness, “when Mr. Jones—Mr. Jones, you know—knocks at the door, tell him who is here; tell him, before he enters, that Master Richard does him the honour of supping with us to-night.”

Dick looked at the raised pie and the lobster upon the well-furnished table, and protested with sincerity that for his part he esteemed it a real pleasure to sup with Mr. Jones. His politeness had hitherto prevented him from speaking of the expected visitor, but mention having thus been made of him, he ventured to ask whether Mr. Jones was a nice man.

“A nice man!” ejaculated the old lady, with a sudden flush upon her wrinkled countenance. “Oh, I forgot; you do not know him; how should you, my poor boy? Well, he is generally considered rather nice, I believe; is he not, Betsy?”

“Oh yes, Ma’am,” replied that domestic; “he is so beautiful, and so genteel-like, and so kind; and then there’s nothing like pride about Mr. Jones neither, who has been everywhere, and done such a many things. In fact, for my part—though I’m only a servant, Ma’am, and no judge—I never set eyes on any person to at all come up to Mr. Jones in any way.”

Mrs. Trimming rubbed her white hands softly together, and nodded her head, as if keeping time with these commendations; and when they were concluded, looked at Dick with sparkling eyes, as though she would ask him what he thought of Mr. Jones *now*.

It is a little difficult to be enthusiastic about people that we have never seen—although, judging from the expectations of many persons in all classes of society, it

would seem to be one of the easiest performances of the human mind — and Dick could only reiterate his satisfaction at the opportunity which was about to be afforded to him of making the acquaintance of this paragon.

“That’s his step, Betsy,” cried the old lady suddenly ; “run to the door, Betsy ; quick.”

“Please, Ma’am, I think it’s only the pleaseman as—”

The old lady shook her head with a smile, as a double rap at the door, which seemed to shake the house, and give the Square assurance of a gentleman, cut short this incredulous speech.

“I think I ought to know his step by this time,” quoth Mrs. Trimming tenderly.

There was a little whispering in the hall, interrupted by a “Never mind, Betsy ; who the dickens cares ?” in ringing cheery tones ; and in strode the guest of the evening. He was a handsome well-built young man enough, of some nine-and-twenty years of age—unless his genial manner lightened him of a year or two—but not of such a surpassing loveliness, as Dick thought, as to excuse Mrs. Trimming, at her time of life, for throwing her arms round his neck and kissing him on both his cheeks.

“Mr. Jones is a very old friend of mine,” observed she in extenuation, and when she had got back her breath again. “I dare say you thought it very odd that I should do such a thing as that, Master Richard, and odder still that such a handsome young fellow should salute ~~me~~ again.”

Dick gallantly hastened to say, that he saw nothing out of the course of nature in the proceeding, at all, for that he himself cherished the remembrance of that

embrace which had been bestowed upon him by Mrs. Trimming on the day of his arrival most warmly: whereat Mr. Jones observed, approvingly, that he was a jolly little chap, and the three sat down to supper, excellent friends.

There was, however, one disturbing thought in the mind of Dick that came between his appetite and the raised pie, and interfered with his acquaintanceship with the lobster again and again! Where had he seen this Mr. Jones before, and under what previous circumstances? He could not have been the medical gentleman who had ushered him into the world thirteen years ago and more, for that would have presumed him to have obtained the right of exercising that delicate function at the early age of fifteen or sixteen; and besides, Dick had always heard that Dr. Babbicombe had been the master of that situation; and yet it was somehow with a baby that Mr. Jones was associated in Dick's mind. With a baby and with a baptism—yes, so far so good; but not with *his* baptism, for the parson of the parish—as there was a silver mug at home with that reverend gentleman's name upon it to prove—had “stood” for him, as second sponsor, and not Mr. Jones. Dick was endeavouring to remember whether he had ever been at the christening of anybody else except himself, when the mysterious stranger cut short his meditations with, “Come, young gentleman, let us have a glass of wine together.”

The voice was entirely strange to him, and seemed to break the spell—to loosen and throw into confusion the links out of which his memory was striving to construct a connected chain. It was good, however, to listen to Mr. Jones for other reasons. For so apparently young a man, his experience was amazingly large, and

whatever he had to tell of, he narrated well, and even brilliantly. He had been a sailor ; and he made Dick long for the blue expanse of ocean lying dreamy under the tropic sky, and anon, wild with fury, climbing, white-lipped, up the reeling vessel's side ; he spoke of the islands of the West, where fruit, and flower, and bird were, as Dick's literature led him to believe, as they ought to be, till the lad longed for those Eden bowers, and loathed the tethered and inadventurous life that he himself was doomed to lead. Betsy, who had tacitly obtained permission to remain in the room, drank in these wonders with open mouth and eyes ; and Mrs. Trimming listened to them with the delighted look of one whose admiration is too great to give place to interest, and who draws her proudest pleasure from the rapt faces of her fellow-listeners. Thus the time swiftly passed, and it was nigh midnight when Mr. Jones suddenly rose up, exclaiming : "You have made me chatter so that I have clean forgotten my pipe. I suppose I may go down stairs as usual ?"

Master Richard Arbour took up his chamber candle-stick with a sigh.

"Would you like to keep me company, young gentleman ?" observed the visitor, perceiving his disinclination to depart. "When I was your age, I smoked a pipe myself. Let him sit up for me, instead of Betsy, Madam, and lock the front door after me ? We shan't be twenty minutes altogether."

"Oh, please do let me, Mrs. Trimming," entreated the lad.

To which the old lady replied, first, that nothing could induce her to suffer anything of the sort to be done, and that if it was done, she would be unworthy to fill the responsible situation which she occupied in that

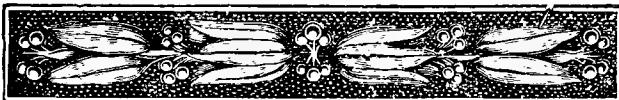
household for ever afterwards ; and secondly, that she could never refuse Mr. Jones anything, and that his young friend might do as he liked.

So the two retired to Mrs. Trimming's ordinary sitting-room ; and Mr. Jones not only filled his own pipe with a pleasant but powerful mixture of tobacco, but endowed Master Richard with another, furnished with Turkish Latakia, or, as he himself expressed it, "mother's milk." Under the influence of this novel narcotic and Mr. Jones's stirring narrations, the lad passed much such an evening as an imaginative young Persian may be supposed to do on his first introduction to hashis. Only whenever Mr. Jones made pause, if it were but to take a momentary sip at his gin and water, and the voice of the charmer ceased, again Dick's brain would revert to the inquiry of, *Where have I seen this man before, and how is it that I know that face so well?* He had certainly seen him christened, or *at* a christening --that was a settled matter, and might be put aside ; but had he not also seen him being married, or giving in marriage somebody else ? Nay, at a funeral, too—it couldn't have been at papa's funeral, for Dick had been but a baby when that happened—but at some funeral, somewhere, he had most certainly beheld Mr. Jones, with his hat off, standing by the grave-side in the open air——. The front door was open, and the cold night-wind blowing freely upon his brow when Dick got thus far.

" You feel better now, lad ?" Mr. Jones was saying, in the voice that was so strange to the lad's ear—" you feel better now, don't you ? You should never swallow your smoke, my young friend, nor drink your gin and water out of the spoon. Good-night, Dick ; I shall see you again soon. Now, mind, when I shut the door, you must put up the chain directly. There !"

A tremendous bang echoed through the house—the protest of a respectable door, bearing such a name as Ingram Arbour upon it, at being unlawfully slammed at three o'clock upon a Sabbath morning—and Master Richard reached his sleeping-apartment by a series of tackings and lurches, and got into bed with his boots on.





CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST DAY AT HOME.

DIS not necessary to set forth how, day by day and hour by hour, the manner of Dick's life in London grew more and more repulsive to him. Judgment will probably be given against him by those who read, as it was by those who saw, for the world's sympathy for young gentlemen in similar plight is rarely to be awakened by any medium short of that of the police courts. That Richard was not treated by Uncle Ingram, or even by Adolphus, as the apprentices of Mrs. Brownrigg were by that famous lady, is true enough. He had plenty to eat and drink, and a great-coat in the winter-time. There were many thousand lads in the stony metropolis very much worse off than he, who yet remained patiently in that station of life to which the guardians of their parish had bound them. We are neither advocates of, nor apologists for our young friend, although we take leave to pity him. Since the Dicks of flesh and blood have failed from the commencement of society to justify themselves in the eyes of mankind, it is not probable that this pen-and-ink creation of ours will fare any better. When Dick suspends relations with China, as it is clear he will, he must needs afford to the public eye the very improper and unmitigated spectacle of an apprentice running away

from his indentures. Maria, with her universal panacea of “Whip him, whip him well!” will be supported in that recommendation by the general voice; and there is no help for it.

Still, if we were great orators to move men’s minds, like Messrs. Edwin James, or Montague Chambers, we would fain plead something for a little runaway lad scarce thirteen (gentlemen of the jury) a handsome curly-haired youth (good ladies), brought up hitherto almost at his mother’s apron-strings, and loving her and Sister Maggie, and all who were decently kind to him, transplanted from his home-garden, and set among a wilderness of grown-up trees, bringing forth fruits of Assiduity, Economy, Punctuality, after their kind, but with only some three blossoms of Goodwill among them, and not one bud of Love. Against which blossoms, too—namely, Mrs. Trimming, Mr. Mickleham, and Mr. Jones—must be set a couple of Upas-trees (for when our hearts are touched, gentlemen of the jury, our tongue naturally flies to metaphor)—the cold dislike of Uncle Ingram, and the malicious hatred of Brother Adolphus.

When June came in, in fact, and set up her hideous parody of leaf and verdure in Golden Square, Dick could not stand it any longer. He could not have stood it so long but for two things. One of these was, that every Saturday and Sunday his natural relatives took themselves away, and left him, and Mr. Jones, the inscrutable, came to sup, and sometimes dine with Mrs. Trimming. This gentleman was Dick’s ideal of what a man should be, and he sat at his feet with never-tiring ears, learning to smoke, and improving in his method of drinking gin and water. Mr. Jones, too, liked Dick in return, and gave him not a few practi-

cal proofs of his regard, although, of late, these had certainly been getting rarer. He took him on one occasion to the Pantomime—passing by the box-office without payment, and thereby increasing his young protégé's admiration for him to the highest degree; and when the spring arrived, he introduced him to Cremorne, where Mr. Jones seemed to have a large circle of acquaintances, and to be especially a favourite among the ladies, though we are bound to say that the evening in question was not that famous one upon which no female was admitted beneath the rank of a baronet's wife. On Sundays, too, Mr. Jones would sometimes take both Mrs. Trimming and Dick to the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park, where the lad most thoroughly enjoyed himself. Except that the animals were in cages—which he secretly thought ought to be dispensed with—he deemed the place quite comparable with the garden inhabited by our first parents. His dream of life was to be employed upon those premises, and to live in the charming little cottage by the turnstile all his days. The cottage had Eaves, but at that period of his life, Dick did not see the necessity for one of those.

“How is it, Mr. Jones, that such few people seem to come to this delightful spot?” observed he one day, when (after a long cessation from such treats) the two were in the monkey-house, employed in the charitable distribution of nuts to the most deserving objects of that pitiable tribe.

“Nobody can get in on Sunday without a ticket,” replied Mr. Jones, “and the number of tickets is limited.”

“Are they very expensive?” inquired Dick, with a secret determination of hoarding up his sixpence a week

of pocket-money until the required sum should be amassed.

“They are not to be bought with money,” answered Mr. Jones: “that gentleman in the corner yonder presented me with my free admission-card.” He pointed to an enormous ape swinging by his tail from a cross-bar, and apparently fast asleep. Dick opened his mouth—not from ear to ear, but the other way: he was astonished, but he had too much respect for his patron to laugh at him.

“*That* gentleman, did you say?” said the boy, pointing to the oscillating but benevolent donor. “How curious that seems; dear me!”

Mr. Jones tapped the cage-bars with his umbrella handle, and cried: “Ralph, Ralph, how are you?”

The ape undid a coil or two of his tail, and so let himself down to the ground with a speed that would have put to shame the smartest sailor in her Majesty’s fleet. He stretched out the black paw at the end of his long brown arm as far as it would go through the bars, and his teeth rattled like a dice-box while Mr. Jones shook hands with him.

“He is saying that he is very well, and that the weather is beautiful, although a little close,” observed that gentleman. Dick’s delight at the familiarity of this specimen of the brute creation was irrepressible. “Even the animals like Mr. Jones,” thought he, “and no wonder;” but he did wonder, nevertheless.

“The fact is, Dick,” explained his friend, “I gave this creature to the Zoological Society, and they gave me a free ticket to admit friends, by way of acknowledgement.”

“Did you give this poor fellow away?” cried the lad, quite scandalised at the sacrifice. “What could have

induced you to part with such a charming, good-tempered——”

“Take care,” cried Mr. Jones, “or he’ll have your fingers off in half a second, young gentleman; I have seen him snap a finger off just as though it were a radish. I came to possess him in this way: when I was a lad not much older than you, Dick, I was left a menagerie.”

“Dear me!” exclaimed the lad in a tone of sympathy, and not quite free from the impression that a menagerie was some fine name for an orphan.

“I found myself the owner of a travelling wild-beast show—a lord of the fowl and the brute to an extent never dreamed of by Mr. Alexander Selkirk. Elephants and guinea-pigs, ostriches and humming-birds were mine, Dick, besides a glass box crammed with boa-constrictors. It was a case of Noah and his ark full, and I did not keep my live-stock very much longer than did that patriarch. I went to smash in a very few weeks, my lad, and found myself with nothing in the world but a *Cercopithecus Engythilhia*, or Long-tailed Grivet—otherwise my talented friend Ralph here—whom no creditor was so hardy as to seize. I had no place to keep him, however, except my greatcoat-pocket, so I made a virtue of necessity, and forwarded the interests of Science, by presenting him to the Zoological Society. Never was ape more gifted, never was Society more charmed. He can hold more nuts in his cheek-pouches than you could win at a shooting-barrow at a fair in half a day. There is no denying that he bites, but we can’t expect perfection in this world. We aint perfect ourselves, Dick, are we?”

Dick humbly replied that he himself was certainly not perfect, but that Mr. Jones appeared to him to approach the apex of the moral pyramid as nearly as was humanly possible. To which Mr. Jones replied: “Perhaps so,

lad ; perhaps I do, my boy :" and patted his head approvingly.

That paternal action reminded the lad at once, as by lightning-flash of recollection, that he had seen Mr. Jones in full canonicals performing in some sacred edifice the ceremony of confirmation, but when or where it was, as usual, he was quite unable to recall ; the desire of doing so, however, was so strong upon him that he took no more interest in animal life for the rest of the day, but passed it in a sort of vertigo of reminiscence.

The one other thing—besides the mitigating influence of Mr. Jones—which had hitherto prevented Dick from bidding adieu to commercial life, was the promise that had been held out to him of revisiting Rose Cottage in six months from the beginning of his banishment. It was a cruel edict that had divorced him from home and friends so long ; but it had certainly heightened the fervour of anticipation with which he now looked forward to the holiday. Mr. Ingram Arbour rather took credit to himself for having thus conferred a gratification at an exceedingly cheap rate, and in his rare moments of humour would even banter his nephew upon this very point. He did not understand how any subject should be kept sacred unless connected with religion or money-matters, and treated poor Richard's tears as pigs treat pearls. Attacked by his uncle there was of course nothing left for it but to submit ; but if Adolphus launched a dart of satire at him—a temptation that young man could rarely resist—Dick would up with whatever material weapon in the way of book or inkstand lay nearest to his hand, and there was a considerable *fracas* in the house, with whipping and disgrace to follow. Dick was not of the sort of stuff to be made a butt of ; and as he

grew older and stronger, this pastime of his elder brother began to have something of the danger as well as the excitement about it of a bull-fight or a tiger-hunt.

The long-promised Friday, however, did at last dawn upon Dick, in all its July glory; and he found himself once more at his old home, and in his mother's arms. She waited for him up in her bed-room, not that she was much more unwell than usual, but because she could not open wide the doorways of her heart with the unimpulsive Maria looking on. That young lady still ruled at Rose Cottage, a virgin queen as yet without a suitor. Johnnie was away from home, having been articled, at his own request, to an attorney in the neighbourhood, and was said to be pursuing the study of the law with a relish; his joy being somewhat diluted, however, by the presence, in the same office, of Mr. William Dempsey, blind—and that but physically—only of one eye. Uncle Ingram and Adolphus had some particular business to transact, and were not to come from town until the next morning; and Maria, who never knew where to stop when among buttered toast, had got one of her tremendous bilious headaches. Everything, in fact, was as it should be for Dick's one holiday. "I tell you what, mother—I tell you what, my Maggie," cried he, in his school-boy jargon, "let us have a lark on the water—let us spend the live-long day on the dear old river. I will row you both up to the grotto. Put on your things, darlings, now, do; and, Maggie, don't forget some cold meat and so on, because it will be so jolly to picnic in the wood, and I'll go and get the boat ready this minute."

Dick, having saluted Jane and Rachel, ran out into the garden like a young horse who first feels the turf beneath his heels; and when he had got the skiff in order, went over all the miniature domain again and

again: he crossed the bridge into the rose-garden, and plucked a nosegay apiece for his mother and sister, and climbed up and swung himself on the same willow-tree branch that had borne him a hundred times before; he tried to catch the minnows in the ditch with his pocket-handkerchief, but found he had lost some of his dexterity in that savage art since his residence in town; he caught sight of the brown back of that identical rat which he had watched in and out of the same water-hole for the last half-a-dozen years; and when he threw the stone at him, missed him, by half an inch, as he had always done before: he marked again the small blue butterflies with speckled under-wings, wheeling about the corner of the osier-bed, and the dragon-flies that lit upon the heads of the tall water-plants, like flames of fire, and while endeavouring to reach them, got into the mud knee-deep, and had to change his trousers—all as of old.

By that time, his passengers and cargo were ready, and off they started in the reverse order to that indicated by the poet, *Youth at the Helm*—for Maggie steered, as she sat by her mother's side—and Pleasure, in the person of Dick, at the Prow, or nearly so. With those dear faces shining full upon him, and all the sights and sounds which he loved best in nature upon all sides, he was indeed a happy boy, and scarce the less so because he knew what short-lived joy it needs must be to him; for his disposition was one that suffered him to make the most of pleasure while its sun was shining, and not to feel the shadow of the coming woe. Under the huge span of the red railway-bridge, while the iron train above them thundered, and shook it as it flew, and past the osier-beds, and in and out the islands at their leisure, paddled the happy three: it seemed as though with leaving land, they had left all sombre thoughts and

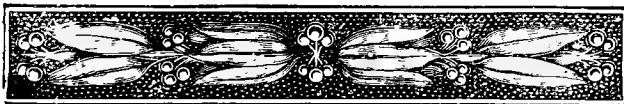
memories behind; Dick laughed as he had scarcely done for half a year, and now and then, with sudden access of affection, would almost upset the boat in crawling to kiss mamma and Maggie. Mrs. Arbour appeared to come once more, after years of submersion, above the surface of existence, and to have her being again, as long ago, in the atmosphere of love. When they entered the great lock-gates, and the boat sunk with the sinking waters, she even volunteered one of those old, old songs which she had once been accustomed to sing within that echoing place; but recollecting on a sudden in whose dear company it had last been sung in that very spot, her voice broke down, and Maggie had to help her through with it. There are few pleasanter minutes in a river voyage than those spent within the four walls of some cool dark lock, with the blue sky only to be seen, and when the song mingles with the falling waters without, as with an instrument; nor afterwards is the change less grateful, when the great gates part, as if by magic, noiselessly, and the world is once more let in upon us in its summer splendour.

On the other side of the lock, and up a back stream above a foaming lasher, they perceived the fisherman Wilson, whom the widow would have gladly passed unseen; but he called out to Master Richard, and the lad rowed towards him as to a friend and teacher of blithe sports, of old.

“I am glad to see you, Sir,” he said, “and Miss Maggie, and good Mrs. Arbour also. I know that it was not of her kind heart that I was obliged to leave her cottage, and that I now fish from shore because I have no punt. Here is a fine trout that you will please to accept, Sir, in token of my respect for you and yours—or at least some of yours.”

Wilson was right in saying that it was not of Mrs. Arbour's will that he had had notice to quit his cottage ; but he did not know that she had kept him in it for many years by paying his rent for him, whenever he was behindhand, until Maria found it out : whereupon she told her uncle ; and that gentleman, who had not forgotten the manner in which he had been once associated with the Emperor of Morocco, turned the poor fisherman out of doors. This meeting somewhat dashed the spirits of the party for a time, but presently they came upon another pleasure-boat, with which Dick raced, and beat it, and then quite a fleet of swans surrounded them and gave them mimic battle, and in a little all was joy again. Thus the three reached the grotto in the wood, whence welled the crystal spring, and there they dined, with more enjoyment than ever yet did alderman at feast ; and thus, more leisurely, they drifted home, their skiff half-filled with water-lilies, and the feathery heads of rushes, and all the river spoil. It was a golden day, not likely to be soon forgotten by any of those three, and to be treasured up by one of them for ever—a home-picture hung in the inner chamber of his soul, evoking, like the image of a saint, all purest thoughts whene'er he looked upon it !





CHAPTER X.

DICK CUTS THE PAINTER.

MR. INGRAM ARBOUR had set the space of three months between Dick's present holiday and his next enfranchisement from Darken-dim Street ; but it would have been all the same to that young gentleman if the appointed limit had been three years instead, or even thirty. He had made up his mind, in short, so soon as he should return to Golden Square, to run away from it, and upon the Tuesday morning after his visit to Rose Cottage, he put that plan into execution. His preparations were not extensive, but they were complete. He packed up all his necessary clothing in a carpet-bag, along with a Bible which his mother had given him, and carried it a couple of streets off before he called a cab. He had seven-and-threepence in his pocket in hard cash ; a capital knife, with six blades, given to him by Dr. Babbicombe at his baptism, in the character of sponsor, as being a more useful present to a young man in the end than a silver one ; and three-quarters of an enormous cake which Jane had made for his especial benefit. He possessed money, arms, and provisions, in short, as a thoroughly equipped exploring-party should do, and started in the highest spirits in pursuit of that shifty thing—a London livelihood. Once only, when he stopped the cabman to drop a letter into a post-office,

his face wore rather a grave expression ; but leaving the solitude of the interior of the cab, and climbing up beside the driver, he soon recovered, in that cheerful company, considerably more than equanimity. No wonder that the thought of that letter made him sad : it was addressed to his mother, and ran—in by no means parallel lines—to this effect :—

“ MY DEAREST MOTHER—I have run away from the crockery business, and turned my hand to another profession which I hope to like better. I could not stand it any longer from Adolphus and Uncle Ingram—especially Adolphus—I could not indeed. I cannot write what I have suffered for the last six months ; but if you knew, oh, I know you would pity and forgive me, mother. I have got a new situation, so don’t fear, and I will write to you sometimes, I will indeed. And whatever you do, dearest mother and Maggie, do not believe what Adolphus and Uncle Ingram say against me. I have got your Bible with me, with your dear handwriting in it. You will never, never be out of my thoughts, you two. Believe me, in spite of this, dear mother, your loving son—
R. ARBOUR.”

The appointment which Dick thus spoke of was not a government one, but had been conferred upon him solely upon his own merits, and in consequence of his personal application. He had seen, some days ago, a neatly executed placard in a hairdresser’s shop-window near to Leicester Square, stating that a Genteel Youth of Good Address was wanted within, to assist in the Cutting Department, and he had applied for the situation upon the spot.

“ Why, you are not much past fifteen, my lad ? ” had been the expostulation of Mr. Tipsaway the proprietor.

"Not much," replied Dick, not thinking it necessary to state that he was even short of that age of discretion ; "but I am exceedingly genteel, I do assure you."

"And you've got a good address, too, I suppose," observed the barber sardonically.

Dick only shook his curly hair and showed his teeth—as the poor Italian organ-boys do when we wave them away with our savage British hands from the sunmit of our dining-room Venetian blinds—and, as it happened, no verbal reply could have served him better.

"He has *some* modesty, then," observed the perruquier to his consort.

"I think he will do very well to send out to the Ladies' Schools," observed Mrs. Tipsaway critically.

Whatever Mrs. Tipsaway thought, Mr. Tipsaway always acted upon, and Mr. Richard Arbour had therefore obtained admittance into their fashionable establishment upon trial. He had promised to be at his post—whatever that might mean—upon the ensuing Tuesday, and he arrived there with his cake and carpet-bag at the appointed hour.

The barber and his wife were perfectly well aware that Master Richard Smith, as he called himself, was a young gentleman who had run away from home, and were all the more glad to have him from that circumstance. Such an escapade on his part was of more value to them than the most respectable references, of which of course he had none : if, they argued, he was found out and taken back again, they would either obtain hush-money from his family, or the affair would be made public and their establishment advertised ; if not, his appearance in their Saloons would be certainly advantageous.

The apartments thus denominated were three chambers of small extent, furnished with that peculiar skimpiness

and incfficiency which distinguish the saloons of diminutive steamboats, and with an enormous basin upon wheels—in two of them—in lieu of a table, which carried out the nautical parallel still further. The fire-places in all these rooms smoked throughout the winter—although Mr. Tipsaway would declare upon his word of honour, when any complaint was made, that it was only a particular quarter of the west wind or the east wind, as the case may be, which caused that unprecedented misfortune ; and in one of them the customers were allowed to smoke, a large proportion of whom happened, for certain reasons, to be foreigners, who would not otherwise perhaps have patronised the place.

“ In that comparatively small apartment, Sir,” observed Mr. Tipsaway to his young recruit, on introducing him to the premises—“ in that comparatively small apartment, are not seldom to be seen some of the most exalted personages in the history of European politics ; the bulwarks of continental liberty, the apostles of that sacred gospel of Equality between man and man—What the deuce do you mean, Frizzle, by running against me in that fashion ? ” ejaculated Mr. Tipsaway, suddenly, as a pale young man, in a white apron and shirt-sleeves, and carrying an enormous can of water, stumbled upon them in the dark and narrow passage that shut off the shop from the saloons. “ Do you know who you *are*, Sir, and who *I* am ? A pretty example of respect and subordination, Frizzle, you are setting to this young man here. Why isn’t this gas-jet lighted, which I have ordered to be done every morning without fail ? ”

“ Please, Sir,” explained the trembling Frizzle, “ Mrs. Tipsaway said—”

“ Silence, Sir,” thundered the proprietor ; “ how do you dare to interrupt me when I am speaking. Go along

with you, and be more careful in future not to turn your cans over your betters.—Where was I, my young friend," added the barber, dropping his voice—"where was I, when that idiot ran up against me?"

"At the sacred gospel of Equality between man and man," suggested Dick with simplicity.

"Exactly so," replied Mr. Tipsaway, whose oratory had been a good deal quenched by the cold water "Well, the short and long of it is, the refugees and such like meets here pretty often, and talks all kinds of lingo One of 'em can't talk at all, however—Count Gotsuchakoff, the Russian gent—he as is a coming through the shop at this instant. Now, just you look at him."

Dick did look at him, as at the first count whom his hitherto unprivileged eye had ever beheld, and this is what he saw: a tall dark sallow man, of about fifty years of age, without a vestige of hair upon his face, and that upon his head cut down to mere gray bristle: he had that painful look of enforced watchfulness about him which only belongs to the deaf and dumb, as though they were solicitous not to lose the play of a single muscle in the countenances of their more fortunate fellow-creatures: upon the left breast of his high-buttoned black waistcoat, there depended about three-halfpenny-worth of red ribbon, the termination of which—doubtless the order of the Golden Eagle, or other costly bird of his native land—was lost in a little side pocket. As he walked through the shop, he lifted his hat to Mrs. Tipsaway, who stood behind the counter, an act of condescension which delighted Dick, and even elicited from Mr. Tipsaway—who was accustomed to it—a cordial expression of praise.

"He's the politest beggar, is the count, Smith, as ever you see. He'll bow to me, and even to you, now,

when he comes in, just as though we were counts ourselves."

In another moment the Russian nobleman had entered the smoking-room, where the two were standing, and saluted them in the magnificent and courtly manner which had been predicted.

"How are you, Old Starch-and-Stiff?" observed Mr. Tipsaway, throwing, however, a most marked respect into his features. "Will you have a glass of the same tipple as usual, and smoke your cabbage-leaf till the other noble swells make their appearance, eh?—You see, Smith," remarked the barber, observing the extreme dismay depicted in Dick's countenance, "it don't signify tuppence what one *says* to a deaf-and-dumb cove like this; one may just as well call him 'Old boy' as 'Your excellency;,' in fact, it would be throwing fine words away, and putting one's self out of one's usual way for nothing."

Upon this explanation the unfortunate count smiled a smile of the most courteous approval, and seating himself at the table, produced a little parcel of tobacco and a small volume, consisting of thin brown paper, out of which raw materials he began constructing cigarettes.

"How deuced sharp he is with his fingers!" observed Mr. Tipsaway admiringly. "I'm hanged if he aint a precious deal more like a monkey than a man. You should see him presently when the others come in and talk their lingo; here he'll sit for hours, bless you, smoking and rolling, rolling and smoking, and making believe to listen, just as though he were all right, you know. He's a very patient chap, that I must say for him. Here's your hodervee, count—that's what he would call brandy, if he could speak, you know—and do keep to the spittoon, there's a *good* creature—he's an awful creetur for that, is the count, and vexes my wife most amazing.

They say he can spectorate over his own head, as he sits in his chair, but I can't say as I ever saw him do it. But now we must clear out of this, for here comes Monsieur de Crespigny, and Herr Singler, and the rest of the foreign gents, who like to be by themselves here, and have no fancy for listeners."

This delicacy on the part of Mr. Tipsaway must not be estimated at too high a rate, considering that if he had applied his ear to the keyhole of the smoking-saloon with ever so great an assiduity, he would never have heard anything but tongues which he did not happen to be able to translate. It would have been a dangerous method of studying foreign pronunciation, too, for the barber was right enough in describing his guests as impatient of eaves-droppers. In that small smoky back room of the unconscious haircutter, certain determinations were now and then arrived at, important enough, and the divulging of which would have brought death or ruin on many an innocent head hundreds of miles away. That wretched room had been the hatching place of many an abortive plot for the confusion of tyrants, and even the nursery of more than one rickety constitution. It was less convenient for the enjoyment of social life, it is true, than for the arrangement of conspiracies, but those who used it had been driven—as *they* thought by an arbitrary and vindictive hand—from country, and home; and friends, and all things that give life a wholesome relish, and had their minds solely set—firmly and savagely as a man sets his teeth—upon wrongs to be righted, and cruelties to be avenged. No foreign spy would have dreamed of invading Mr. Tipsaway's quiet emporium, for it is notorious that *mouchards* are entirely without sense of humour, which, and which alone, might have led them to look with grave suspicion upon the fact of a number

of gentlemen, whose close-cropped heads had the appearance of stubble-fields, frequenting, almost daily, an establishment devoted to cutting and curling.

These men, so scant of linen, so saving of soap, had yet, in Richard's eyes, a certain dignity about them, which Englishmen, similarly stricken by poverty, would perhaps have lacked. When we islanders grow poor, we are apt to cease from being polite, and to regard our fellow-creatures with bitterness ; nor do our shabby hats grow shabbier through too much courteous salutation of the general public ; but a handsome, merry, young face like that of Richard Arbour, was as much a passport to the heart of M. de Crespigny—melancholy as it had grown to be—as when he had been a prosperous gentleman, and leader of the extreme left in the Chamber of Deputies.

He congratulated Dick upon his new appointment at Mr. Tipsaway's, as though he had been some cadet of noble family just gazetted page to the French king ; and thus in a couple of minutes won more of gratitude from the impulsive lad than Uncle Ingram had been able to earn by thirteen years of practical benefits. Oh, great and wonderful powers of human look and speech, that can confer such gracious happiness upon the hearts of others by a mere smile or tone ! and oh, still more wonderful human blindness and arrogance, that spare to bestow a gift that costs the donor so little !

Although, however, M. de Crespigny—who conversed with Dick in English, of course, never imagining that a lad in his position would understand any other language than his own—and our young runaway did become fast friends in a few days, it is not to be supposed that the barber's boy had nothing else to do but to cultivate the acquaintance of foreign noblemen. On the day after his arrival, he was taken in hand by Mr. Frizzle, a feeble young man,

much bullied by Tipsaway, and with an expression of countenance piteous as that of a hunted kangaroo, to which animal he bore a further resemblance in an enormous linen pouch, which he always carried about with him, filled with the implements of his profession. Whether Mr. Frizzle had real genius or not, is a question only to be decided—or rather to be fought about, for they never decide—by the psychological metaphysicians ; but that he had at all events “a turn” for music, there is no denying. Like other eminent persons in obscure circumstances, however, who have been attached to that divine calling, he pursued it under many disadvantages ; his principal instrument of melody being the comb kept for the general use of the customers, by help of which and some thin brown curling-paper, he would perform curious pieces of his own composition—muffled oratorios : extracting music from the tortoise-shell, like Orpheus and the earliest masters of the art.

“Frizzle, why don’t you stop that infernal twanging ?” roared Mr. Tipsaway at 11 A.M. from the front shop, on the morrow of Dick’s arrival. “Don’t you know that it’s the last Saturday in the month, and that Mr. Smith must be taken to school this morning ?”

Dick thought with a shudder of Messrs. Dot and Carriwun’s, and his heart sank within him lest the study of the mathematics should be indeed necessary for the hair-cutting line of business, as it seemed to be for every other.

“To school, Sir !” cried he ; “I have been to school, Mr. Tipsaway, and learned up to vulgar fractions.”

“You will see more of them to-day, lad,” grinned the barber, in intense enjoyment of the coming witticism, “than you ever saw in your life before. It is a charity-school you are going to this morning, where all the boys

may be said to be vulgar fractions. It is the *experimētum in corpore vili*, as my classical friend Herr Singler once observed. You are about to learn hair-cutting upon paupers' heads, Mr. Richard Smith. The parish authorities have such a belief in our accurate knowledge of the prevailing *mode*, that they place one hundred and twenty heads at our disposal every six weeks. Frizzle, give him the bluntest pointed scissors that we have in the shop, lest he should abuse the confidence thus reposed in us ; and don't take any combs there, mind that, for you know what happened once, in consequence, to Mr. Camellair, the artist, who has never since visited our establishment."

Thus it was that Mr. Richard Arbour mastered the rudiments of the science of hair-cutting. His uncultivated fancy was allowed to sow its wild oats in charity-schools and workhouses, among locks for the nourishment of which no Polar bear is slain, no *Pommade de Tipsaway* is concocted ; nay, if truth must be told, he was even lent out *gratis* upon Sunday mornings to inferior establishments in low neighbourhoods, nor until he had disfigured many hundreds of the working-classes with his ignorant shears, was he judged worthy to try his 'prentice hand upon a gentleman. That time, however, did at last arrive, and the genteel youth of good address drew customers to the house, as Mr. Tipsaway had anticipated. The lad was a considerable relief to those who had hitherto only experienced the nervous attentions of Mr. Frizzle. That young man—besides his introduction of the foreign body we have already hinted at into the luxuriant tresses of Mr. Camellair—had been guilty of enormous indiscretions. He had almost driven Major Bantam into an apoplexy by whistling a melody—softly but quite perceptibly—upon a

bald spot on that indignant officer's head, as he stood behind him "thinning his top," as the phrase goes ; and when Miss Comely Pettigrew had asked him whether he thought that he had a pair of whiskers to suit her—meaning, of course, those artificial *frisettes* used for distending the side-hair—he had fairly spluttered with laughter, and rushed out of the room. Moreover, his conversation—a most important matter with gentlemen of his profession—was feeble to quite an extraordinary degree. Beyond "The weather is distressingly 'ot to-day, Mem," or, "'Ow that chimney *do* smoke now, to be sure, Sir, don't it?" he had absolutely nothing to say ; while, in place of introducing the subject of purchases warily and delicately, he would come out with : "Now, buy a pot of our pommade, Sir—*do*," as though he were appealing to the pity rather than the self-interest of the customer.

The foreign gentlemen, in particular, whose inexplicable politeness affected the nerves of Mr. Frizzle, were exceedingly glad to be waited upon by Dick instead of him : they did not think it necessary to break off their conversation when the lad chanced to have occasion to enter their room ; and it must be confessed that he took advantage of that circumstance to drink in as much as his knowledge of the French tongue, imparted to him by Sister Maggie, would permit him. He could not understand very much, of course—even when he could translate it—of their talk about the Solidarity of the Peoples, or of the moment being Supreme for down-trodden Nationalities, but he knew that they were talking secrets, and that he was listening to them, unknown to the speakers, which is a state of affairs gratifying to most people.

Moreover, he was deeply interested in the scenes

themselves, and the persons who composed them: in his friend and patron, M. de Crespigny, so eloquent and so enthusiastic; in Herr Singler, so quiet and yet so weighty, that no man put in a word while he was speaking; in Signor Castigliano, so scornfully indignant in hand, and voice, and eye; and of the ten or a dozen conspirators who assembled, all or some, in that little saloon daily, especially in the silent, sullen Count Got-suchakoff, who sat in that stormy parliament, sipping his brandy, and smoking his tobacco, as though he were the sole occupant of the apartment. Now and then, a slip of paper would be handed to him with some pencilled words, requesting his advice on this or that matter, and he would write his reply on a leaf of his little cigarette-book, with incredible speed. The conspirators had evidently a high opinion of his judgment, and indeed, for five-and-thirty years this exile from St. Petersburgh — banished perhaps for writing what he might have spoken with impunity, had he been able to speak at all—had been prompter or participator in half the revolutions of Europe. There was a great attraction and mystery about this man for Dick, who had never chanced to see a deaf-and-dumb person before, and his sharp young eyes were often fixed upon him when the count was by no means aware of it. That gentleman would sometimes stay behind when his friends departed, finishing his *eau de vie*, and on a certain occasion, the lad surprised him in the performance of a rather singular action.

Dick had opened the saloon-door with unusual quietness, and without the draught or other accompanying circumstance, such as generally attracted the count's attention at once, announcing his presence, and behold, there was the Russian arranging the slips of paper that

had been given to him during the conference in his voluminous pocket-book ! This struck Dick as being remarkable, because he had heard M. de Crespiigny say that he would warn Count Gotsuchakoff to be particular in destroying them, and the count, on receiving the written suggestion, had apparently done so — folding each slip as soon as he had perused it, and consuming it in the gas-jet that was always alight in the room for smoking purposes—not only on that occasion, but ever afterwards, as the lad had seen him do many times. This contradictory circumstance would not, however, of itself perhaps have awakened Dick's suspicions, had not the Russian suddenly started up, thrust the pocket-book into his bosom, and seizing the lad by the throat, uttered in unmistakable French, and with a rolling of the *rs* beyond the reach of most articulate-speaking men—(not to speak of a deaf-and-dumb gentleman), that one tremendous rage-laden continental shibboleth —“*Sacre !!*”





CHAPTER XI.

THE PERILS OF EAVES-DROPPING.

RHE modesty of talent—provided that it be accompanied with a stock of patience—is always sure of its reward. If Master Richard Arbour had ever chanced to plume himself among the foreign customers of Mr. Tipsaway, upon his knowledge of the French tongue, it is not unlikely that the moment which found him in the grasp of the Russian count would have been his last. Rage and fear contended in the man's evil eyes, and blanched his cheek, while his wicked fingers tightened about the poor lad's throat, as though their trade was murder. Dick's countenance was rapidly growing black, when he bethought himself of throwing an expressive glance at the table, and of making as though he would reach with one of his hands the pencil that still lay there. He felt convinced that his life depended on the count's imagining that his secret was yet undiscovered—that he was a deaf and dumb man still in *his* eyes as in those of the rest of the world—and therefore, instead of exclaiming: “Oh, spare me, for I never meant to find you out;” or, “Forgive me, count, for discovering that you are an impostor,” he judiciously confined himself to making signs.

The count relaxed his gripe to consider a little, and

then released the lad altogether, though taking care to stand between him and the door. Dick took up the pencil and wrote : “ I am very sorry to have disturbed you, Sir ; I thought you had all left the room, and was coming in to put it straight.”

“ You lie ! ” returned the count, in the most delicate and microscopic handwriting that ever was seen.

“ I also came to see if there was any brandy left,” wrote Dick.

This did not happen to be in the least the case, but it was more in accordance with the Russian’s notion of what was probable, than the simple truth of the other answer.

“ What did you see ? ” inquired Gotsuchakoff, setting down the words with his practised fingers, while he kept his lynx eyes fixed upon the trembling youth.

“ I saw *you*, count.”

“ What else, boy—what else ? ”

“ Please, count, I saw that you had drunk all the brandy.”

Gotsuchakoff was evidently at a nonplus. He did not know whether to believe the boy or not. He hesitated as to whether he should push him further, afraid, in case of his being unaware that he had really spoken, of impressing him too much with the importance of what had happened.

“ And did you not *hear* anything ? ” wrote the count, unable to bear the horrid uncertainty which consumed him.

This was the most perilous moment of all to Dick, and luckily the lad was by this time fully aware of it. His features expressed the most extreme bewilderment, and even a touch of drollery. “ *Hear*, count ? ” wrote he, in rather a shaky hand, it must be confessed ; “ how

should I hear anything, with nobody but you in the room?"

The Russian was looking him through and through with a terrible distrust, but the smile which the lad had conjured up seemed completely to disarm him. He drew a long breath of intense relief, and wiped away the drops that stood upon his pale forehead. He had but uttered a single French word, after all, reasoned he, which, even if distinctly heard, might very well have sounded to the lad's English ears like the mere guttural exclamation of a dumb man excited to passion. At all events, if murder were not to be done, it was better to believe this, and to efface the recollection of the whole matter from the boy's mind as soon as possible.

"I beg you pardon, young Sir," wrote he; "I am afraid that I have been taking a little more drink than is good for me. Let us shake hands, and forget this stupid business."

The Russian, to whom a bribe appeared no more unreasonable — and probably much less so — than a friendly present, or a fair commercial exchange, pressed a crown-piece into the hand of the barber's boy, whose fingers closed on it mechanically, and abruptly left the room. He had prolonged the interview to the utmost limits consistent with the other's safety, for the unnatural tension of Dick's faculties could be maintained no longer; he heard the count's heavy footsteps passing through the front shop—who probably saluted its proprietor with his accustomed courtesy, for Mr. Tipsaway's voice replied: "Good-bye, old dummy," doubtless with a smile of great obsequiousness—and he heard no more; but fell down, face on the table, in a fainting-fit, thereby upsetting the brandy bottle.

The crash of the breaking glass brought Mrs. Tipsaway, who had a housekeeper's ear for that particular noise, directly into the smoking-room; and her raised voice, for which Mr. T. had a husband's ear, at once summoned that gentleman to her assistance.

"What do you think of *this*, Mr. Tipsaway?" cried she with bitterness, naturally, though somewhat unjustly, directing her anger against the only animate object. "What have you got to say for your pet apprentice *now*?"

"Now, it was well known that Dick was rather the pet of the lady than of her husband, but when the female mind is excited, it not uncommonly spurns the trammels of vulgar fact; and Mrs. Tipsaway kept her own mental powers particularly free and fetterless in that respect.

"He's as drunk as a young lord," confessed Mr. Tipsaway apologetically; "there is not a doubt of that."

"And what do we want of your young lords here?" inquired the lady with indignation. "Why must you be picking up a young swell like this, who must have his best French brandy, forsooth, and destroy the bottle afterwards, when we might have had a charity-boy as cheap, or cheaper——"

How they could have got one cheaper, considering that they gave Master Richard Smith just nothing at all, cannot, unfortunately, be here disclosed, for Mrs. Tipsaway pulled herself short up, when she had got thus far, to emit an expression of astonishment, which, in the mouth of a less genteel lady, might have been mistaken for a whistle.

"Look here!" cried she, exhibiting the boy's neck, the cravat of which she had been loosening; "somebody has been trying to throttle the lad. Here are the marks of four fingers and a thumb."

“Gotsuchakoff, *sacre!*” murmured the lad, with his eyes still closed.

The barber and his wife exchanged looks of profound terror.

“That lad has been insulting the count, and the foreign gentleman will never come here again, perhaps,” groaned Mr. Tipsaway, to whom the refugees paid a very tolerable sum for the exclusive use of the smoking-saloon. What have you been doing, you young rascal?” inquired he, at the same time giving his genteel apprentice a tremendous shaking. “What have you been at, Sir, eh?”

“I saw nothing, I heard nothing,” replied poor Dick, who imagined that the Russian was still cross-examining him; “I only came to put things to rights — Oh, it’s you, Mr. Tipsaway, is it?”

“Yes, it’s me, you drunken young vagabond, and what then?”

“Why, here’s some money that the count left me to pay for the broken glass,” quoth Dick, whose wits were reawakening. “He was awfully drunk though, for all that, I do assure you. He set on me, just because I could not understand his telegraphing, like some wild animal.”

“He went through the shop very steadily,” observed Mr. Tipsaway, perceptibly mollified by the silver, but still a little incredulous.

“That may do for Mr. T.,” observed the better-half of that gentleman to herself, “but not for me, young gentleman: I heard the glass break *after* the count left the house.”

“Anyhow, he nearly choked me,” observed Dick pettishly, and adjusting his neckcloth; “and I had rather not have anything more to do with Count Gotsuchakoff, please.”

“ Pooh, pooh ! he’ll forget it the next time he comes,” returned Mr. Tipsaway ; “ and, besides, you are going to-morrow, Smith, to Miss Backboard’s instead of Frizzle, who, she complains, *will* giggle all the time he is cutting her young ladies’ hair. The count will not certainly remember his drunken frolic for eight-and-forty hours.”

Dick thought within himself, that if Mr. Tipsaway had felt the Russian’s fingers at his own windpipe, he would not have described the occurrence quite so playfully ; but since he had no desire to make the barber his confidant, he affected to be satisfied, and made no further complaint.

Mr. Tipsaway, who had heard the muffled oratorio in full performance in the front shop for several minutes, here rushed away to deprive the musician of his instrument, which he justly deemed was one that required a curtain or other means of concealment between the player and the general public, at least as much as any organ. Mrs. Tipsaway stayed behind, to lay her hand upon the lad’s shoulder confidentially, and to observe in a motherly tone : “ Come, Dick, you must tell *me* the truth, my lad, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

Dick knew enough of the character of Mrs. Tipsaway to be aware, that the commission of a secret to her ears would be about equivalent to advertising it in the columns of any local newspaper of tolerable circulation ; so he smiled sweetly—a thing Dick could always do when conversing with a lady—and replied with simplicity : “ The whole truth about what, Ma’am ? ” in order to gain time for fictitious composition.

“ Now, don’t aggravate me,” replied Mrs. Tipsaway—and this time with a dash of piquancy in her accents, less motherly than step-motherly—“ for I am doing a

hair-chain for a bride-elect, and can't afford to have my fingers set all of a tremble. What did the count give you that piece of money for, and how came that bottle broken?"

"I broke the bottle, Mrs. Tipsaway," exclaimed the youth, clasping his penitent hands.

"And the money, the money?" cried the lady, stamping her foot.

"The count gave me the money for having thrashed me so, because, because——"

"Because he caught you helping yourself to his brandy," cried Mrs. Tipsaway, triumphantly finishing the sentence.

"Ah, yes, Ma'am. I perceive it is impossible to deceive your sagacity."

"Then don't try it again, Smith, mind *that*," continued the lady with emphasis. "Men have tried it—women have tried it—Frizzle has tried it; but it has never succeeded yet with Martha Tipsaway. It is not very likely, therefore, that a child like you will have much chance. Trust me, boy, and I will take you to my arms—that is to say, of course, you must keep your distance, and not forget that you are the 'prentice, and I the missis; but try to deceive me, young gentleman, and you'll wish yourself one of them figures in the window, whose ears cannot feel a box, nor whose mouth appreciate victuals."

With which piece of didactics Mrs. Tipsaway swept out of the room in a whirlwind of silk and cap-strings.



CHAPTER XII.

MISS BACKBOARD'S YOUNG LADIES.

MISS BACKBOARD'S fashionable seminary for young ladies was situated in a pleasant suburb of the metropolis, and had a strip of garden lying in front of it, bearing the same relation to the house in superficial extent as each of the slices of carpet in the dormitories bore to its respective bed. A holly-tree, significant of Prudence, kept watch at the garden-gate ; the daisy, emblem of Innocence, blushed in its little grass-borders ; the modest violet, at its proper season, indicated, in its own sweet language, the character of the inmates of the establishment ; no red rose cried : " He is near !—he is near ! " no white rose wept : " He is late ! " but such of Miss Backboard's young ladies as had got so far as to think about " him " at all, were represented in that innocent plot by the unimpatient lily, which whispers, " I wait ; " and, on one side of the gravel-walk that led to the front-door by the acacia-tree, which sighs but of Platonic Love. Only, when Miss Backboard eradicated the wicked iris and the two demonstrative jonquil from her parterre, it was inconsistent of her to spare that Virginian jasmine—symbol of separation—which climbed up the entire face of the house, and looked down, over the wall, upon the passion-flowers in the next garden.

The jasmine might look, but the young ladies mighn't. Not to look out of the window," was one of the edicts of the Backboardian code, which might, for precautionary severity, have been drawn up by Mrs. Praisegod Barebones, for the benefit of female Cavaliers. Miss Backboard herself, however, was constantly on the watch at one or other of the casements, like Sister Anne on Bluebeard's tower, and took note of every male creature that came in at the little iron gate. She had already caused two bakers' boys to be dismissed from their situations, for whistling melodies relating to the affections as they approached her house ; and a third was even now upon his trial for kissing his hand to her front windows—the defence set up by the accused party being, that he was only engaged with his pocket-handkerchief. The postman was not permitted to intrust his letters for the establishment to any hand but hers ; and she winnowed the correspondence thus obtained with a skill and completeness that Sir James Graham and his myrmidons might have envied. A pink envelope, or an envelope with a sealing-wax "kiss" upon it, or with an affectionate motto on its seal, was arrested by her vigilant fingers as a health-officer would seize upon some infected wretch whose escape from quarantine must needs bring death and desolation into a thousand homes. No male handwriting was suffered to pass at all without inquiry of the would-be recipient ; and if the serpent who wrote it was no nearer of kin than a bachelor-cousin, the missive was ruthlessly torn up and scattered to the wanton winds. Nor was the export-trade less strictly watched than the import. All letters except to *bonâ-fide* relatives were inspected. Yes ; conscientious Miss Backboard did indeed peruse the whole of the correspondence between the young ladies of her own establishment and their

“eternal friends” at similar educational seminaries or elsewhere: twice a week that indefatigable female performed the awful task in its completeness, beginning with, “My own dearest, dearest Isabel” in the middle of the first page, and so, through the slanting shower of affectionate commonplaces to the all-important postscript No. 2. No wonder the good lady was consumed by anxieties, and haggard with suspicions; no brain could stand such letter-reading twice a week for long. She looked for hidden meanings in sentences wherein the writer had seen no necessity for inserting any meaning at all; she scorched the missives before the fire, with a view of bringing forth the secrets concealed in lemon-juice that were never there; she conceived that some crafty cipher lay in the frequent and unnecessary dashes which italicised the general contents, and imagined elopements and rope-ladders lurked in the very loops of the *Is*.

It was Miss Backboard herself who did Master Richard Arbour, otherwise Smith, the honour of receiving him at her own door-step, having reconnoitred him for several minutes — as a medieval porter might have eyed a stranger knight — before admitting him to even that proximity.

“Whence come you, boy?” quoth she, in that blank-verse style exceedingly popular with ladies of scholastic pursuits, when their time and tempers permit them to make use of it. “Whence come you, and from whom?”

“I am the new barber’s boy from Mr. Tipsaway’s, please, Ma’am.”

Miss Backboard’s eagle eye detected in the Genteel Youth too pronounced a gentility.

“I mistrust you, boy,” returned she; “my mind mis-gives me: do you play a part with me?”

"No, please, Ma'am, I play nothing. Frizzle plays a good deal, when master will let him; but the only time I ever tried, I broke a tooth."

"Broke a tooth!" echoed the astonished schoolmistress; "I don't know what you mean; I don't see that you have any teeth broken."

"No, please, Ma'am; it was only the tooth of the comb that was broken. Frizzle always plays upon a comb. It cost me eightpence to——"

"Good gracious! I hope you don't bring that comb here?" cried Miss Backboard sharply.

"Oh no, Ma'am; that would not be '*comme il faut*,'" smiled Dick, with his best accent. The nature of his mission tickled the lad immensely, and put him in spirits too high for his position.

"What! you speak French?" exclaimed the terrified lady. "You are no barber's boy."

"*Perruquier*, if you please, Madam; yes, that is what I am. It is essential to our fashionable connection, says Mr. Tipsaway, that one, at least, in the establishment should have some knowledge of that language. I learned it from my boyhood."

"Boyhood!" screamed Miss Backboard. "Why, what do you call yourself now?"

"Mr. Tipsaway calls me one of his young men, Ma'am. 'One of my young men will be at your house to-day, Miss Backboard,' he wrote, meaning myself; and, indeed, I am more than fourteen years old already."

"Fourteen," murmured the schoolmistress to herself; "that is not a dangerous age. Hum! Yes, you may come in."

She ushered him into a small apartment on the right of the entrance, hung round with blank maps and a few unframed landscapes; a couple of enormous globes

filled each a recess on either side of the fireplace, and a few books of the *Mangnall's Questions* class leaned up against one another on their shelves in a manner which, under any roof less correct than Miss Backboard's, would have suggested intoxication. An inclined plane—torture-engine peculiar to females — stood in one corner, and a pair of dumb-bells (probably the only ones in the house), in another. The apartment was, in short, devoted to the severer branches of the educational course, inclusive, as it subsequently appeared, of hair-cutting.

Miss Backboard rang the bell. "Elizabeth," observed she to the domestic, with the air of a stage-monarch ordering a banquet, "let a cloth be spread, and inform those young ladies who require his services, that this person — the young person from Mr. Tipsaway's — is awaiting them in the Geographical Chamber. And, Elizabeth, tell Miss Crummy to come down first, because her dressing-gown is the largest, and will do for all the others."

By the time Master Richard had arranged the cloth upon the floor, and put on the kangaroo apron, the young lady in question made her appearance. A loose and voluminous pink robe concealed the form, which was also doubtless voluminous and pink ; but the sight of her chubby cheeks and good-humoured eyes ought to have satisfied anybody.

"I think you forgot your courtesy, Miss Crummy," observed the schoolmistress with marked severity.

That young lady immediately rose from the cane-bottomed chair and made a profound obeisance.

Master Richard Smith, in imitation of the Chevalier de Crespigny, bowed almost to the ground.

"Be quiet, boy !" ejaculated Miss Backboard sharply. "Do you suppose my pupil bowed to *you* ?" The school-

mistress seated herself on the upper extremity of the inclined plane, and from that station superintended the operations.

“ You are looking out of window, Miss Crummy, which is forbidden ; be good enough to keep your eyes fixed on the ground.”

Miss Crummy did not reply ; but Dick perceived the back of her neck to become of a deeper rose-colour, and her plump figure to shake as with secret laughter beneath his admiring eyes.

“ You are exposing your hand, Miss Crummy, in an indelicate manner. Where are your mits, which I have particularly directed to be worn in the presence of strangers ? ”

“ I thought, Madam,” replied the young lady, speaking in the French tongue, for the private ear of the schoolmistress, “ that you only meant we should do so in the presence of grown-up gentlemen, and that for this little boy here— ”

“ Silence, girl ! ” exclaimed the schoolmistress hastily, and in German : “ ‘ the little boy here,’ as you call him, understands French.”

Miss Crummy bit her lips, and again Dick perceived an undulatory motion communicated to the entire dressing-gown beneath him.

Before this young lady left the room, indeed, she had earned for herself a dozen rebukes, and one most barbarous punishment — a wooden mark was suspended from her ample neck, the presence of which ornament forbade any companion to communicate with her except in the German language, wherein she had shown herself no great proficient in the Geographical Chamber. How long this was to be endured, Dick did not know ; but he was relieved to hear Miss Crummy’s cheerful laugh

as she ran up stairs, apparently with the lightest of hearts, though with a step that went nigh to shake the establishment.

Angel after angel, sylph after sylph, came down and arrayed herself in the voluminous pink, under Dick's assiduous hands. He did not giggle, like Mr. Frizzle, he did not again even venture upon bowing, like M. de Crespigny. Miss Backboard began to be mollified by his perfect behaviour, and to entertain that trust in his methodical quietness which she had denied to his tender years : she yawned while the fifteenth seraph was having her tips taken off, and inquired languidly whether there was any more to come. The seraph replied that there was only Miss Mickleham to come, who had been delayed until last by reason of her being under punishment.

“Very well, then,” replied Miss Backboard loftily : “you may tell her that it is her turn when you have done.” With which that imperial female launched herself off her inclined plane with the air of a ship of ninety guns, and sailed majestically out of the room.

“Queer old lady that, is she not?” observed the fifteenth seraph interrogatively, about two minutes after the door had closed, and when it was made clear, by the creaking of the stairs, that her preceptress had really left the keyhole.

Master Richard Arbour, who had remarked the young lady under present treatment as being by far the best behaved and most rigid of all the heavenly bodies that had preceded her, was perfectly aghast at this familiarity.

“Look here,” pursued she, producing a considerable bundle of letters stamped, sealed, and directed in readiness for her Majesty’s ~~mails~~, “put these in your pocket, and make haste. I have been trying to make you take hold of them this five minutes, only you’re such a stupid

boy. I was within half a second of running a hair-pin into you, I do assure you."

Dick took the packet with an air of the profoundest astonishment. "Well, and what am I to do with them, please, Miss, now I've got 'em?"

"Why, post 'em," ejaculated the young lady snappishly. "What on earth do you suppose ought to be done with them? We always got Frizzle to post 'em, before you came, and we expect, of course, that you will do as much for us. Here's half-a-crown, and we're much obliged to you for your trouble."

"Mademoiselle," replied Master Richard Arbour, laying his hand and scissors on his heart, "I will post the letters with pleasure; but to take your money for doing it is a thing quite out of the question."

"Well, that's polite at all events," replied the young lady, rising and approaching the glass. "But I don't think you cut my hair quite so well as the other. Why doesn't that stingy old lady let us have a couple of mirrors? One positively can't see *how* one looks. How do I look behind, boy?"

The startled Dick hastened to give it as his opinion that she looked charming from every possible point of view; whereupon the fifteenth seraph laughed, and said he was a nice lad.

"Only," she added, "don't you go telling Miss Mickleham about those letters, mind, because she's a little"—a pantomimic action of the hands, significant of staylacing here took place—"a little strait-laced, you know, that's all. Good-bye, boy. Thank ye!"

With which adieu the young lady opened the door, and called Miss Mickleham in much such a tone as one female saint might evoke another to martyrdom: "Miss Mickleham, the young person is waiting to cut your hair."

Every male individual beneath a certain rank in the social scale was held in Miss Backboard's establishment to be a "person," while all above and of that rank were spoken of (and even but that very rarely) as "gentlemen." The word "man" was entirely ignored, and perhaps unknown at Acacia House.

Most of the young ladies had hitherto floated into the apartment as though the air were water, and the little material substance that belonged to them had been made of cork; but Miss Mickleham used a somewhat graver mode of progress, either in consequence of being under punishment, or by reason of having a number of works upon Political Economy in her hands, that the author had the temerity to call "popular," but which, nevertheless, may have kept her down a little. That abstruse science oppressed her existence at Miss Backboard's (who considered its study to be a part of woman's mission), just as Practice had oppressed poor Dick elsewhere, and he intuitively sympathised with her as she put down, by the side of the terrestrial globe, all the volumes, save one, with a great sigh. That one she was bound never to part with, eating or drinking, sleeping or hair-cutting, until she had mastered certain rather unentertaining chapters upon the drain of gold; and she sat down in the pink dressing-gown with it in her hand. Dick's tender heart would have been touched by sight of that young cheek robbed of half its bloom by sorrow, and by those long black eyelashes steeped in tears, even had he not detected by her likeness to her father the beautiful daughter of good Mr. Mickleham of Darkendim Street, at the first glance.

As it was, the memory of the old man's kindness moved him so, awakening, as often happens, other memories with it of loving hearts now sundered from his

own, perhaps for ever, that *his* eyes too began to fill with dew, which presently overflowing them, descended in a couple of large warm tears upon the young lady's neck. The tresses that should have protected it were in Dick's trembling hands, so that they fell directly upon the velvet skin with certainty of detection, and the sixteenth seraph jumped up from her chair, and exchanged the drain of gold for a shrill note of indignation.

“How dare you, Sir?” she began; then, looking at Dick's tearful face, she sank her voice—“What ails you, my good boy? Is there anything I can do for you, poor lad?”

“Yes, dear young lady, yes.”

The dear young lady looked like a ruffled swan at this exordium.

“Tell your good father that Richard Arbour is not ungrateful to him, though he may have seemed so, and that he could not look upon his daughter in her sorrow without being sad himself.”

“Are you Mr. Arbour's nephew, then, that ran away?” cried she. “Oh, pray go back—pray do, while there is time. Your uncle is being more and more set against you than ever. Papa can do little for you, though he has tried his best; but perhaps, if you would come back, he might do something. Do, pray, come at once to us—that is to *him*. This is where we live.” She tore the fly-leaf out of the book she held, which happened to have her name and direction on it, and Dick kissed it gratefully, and put it carefully away.

“Perhaps I will, dear young lady; and if I am taken back, it shall at least be through your father. Forgive my rudeness and impertinence——”

“Hush!” cried the girl; “I hear Miss Backboard coming. I have nothing to forgive in you—nothing!”

She snatched up her books from their resting-place, and was about to leave the room, when the voluminous dressing-gown, which she had forgotten to throw off, caught in the projecting leg of the terrestrial globe, and in another moment there was a frightful crash, and poor Miss Mickleham stood in horror amidst the wreck of the universe.

“Good Heavens!” cried the schoolmistress, rushing in, “what *has* happened? You clumsy little barber’s monkey you, what *have* you done?”

“I couldn’t help it, Ma’am,” cried Dick, without an instant’s hesitation; “my apron caught in it just as I was trying to look out Jerusalem. I had done with the young lady, Ma’am, and always wishing to improve myself when opportunity offers, was——”

“Silence, Sir!” interrupted Miss Backboard viciously. “Leave the room, Miss Mickleham, without one word, if you please—without one syllable. You have done me an irreparable damage, boy, and you shall never come to this house again.”

“You have got another globe, Ma’am, haven’t you?” replied Dick, pretending to whimper, but secretly delighted with having saved Miss Mickleham from the wrath of her mistress.

“Yes, you idiot,” ejaculated Miss Backboard; “but it’s a celestial one. Do you suppose that these globes are duplicates? If Mr. Tipsaway doesn’t punish you pretty severely, my lad, it will not be for want of a line from me, I do assure you.”

Dick was rather afraid of Miss Backboard’s anticipating the promised chastisement there and then, and made haste to get out of Acacia House as soon as he could; and, indeed, she was not able to resist aiming a box at his ears as he passed her at the front-door, which he only

eluded by great forethought and activity. As soon as the garden-gate clanged behind him, however, Dick's face became radiant with happiness: and pulling out the address which Miss Mickleham had given to him, proceeded to enclose in it a considerable lock of soft brown hair, which he had covertly snipped from that young lady's luxuriant tresses.





CHAPTER XIII.

MONSIEUR DE CRESPIGNY.

EHE day after Dick's visit to Acacia House was one of great anxiety to him ; partly on account of the expected letter from Miss Backboard, denouncing his conduct towards the terrestrial globe, and partly by reason of the singular secret he had discovered concerning Count Gotsuchakoff, which he did not know whether he ought to disclose to his friend M. de Crespigny or not. He spoiled several excellent heads of hair that morning with his indecisive hands, and in one instance, clipped some portion of a gentleman's ear off, with no better excuse for the misadventure than that his hair and his skin were really so very much of the same colour, that he couldn't tell which was which ; a remark which did not by any means reconcile the Fresh-complexioned to his fate.

In the afternoon, the foreign gentlemen began to arrive in their saloon in unusual numbers, and Dick's attendance was required there for the handing of coffee, which it was not their custom to take except when a long sitting was anticipated. There was but little speechifying, and what there was, was carried on in subdued tones, but there was a considerable display of documents with figures on them, which the youth perceived were not

statements of accounts, but statistics of armed men. There was to be a rising somewhere, and that upon a very extensive scale, and Herr Singler's brow was weightier with purpose than usual, and the fire in Signor Castiglano's eyes burned fierce and luridly. M. de Crespigny carried on a brisk correspondence with Count Gotsuchakoff, and a score of times the Russian bent forward and held the slip of paper in the gas-flame until it was completely consumed. So deeply interested, indeed, were the whole company in the business on hand that afternoon, that even the presence of Dick was regarded with some little impatience, and the speakers would drop their voices and linger on their words, if he entered the room even for a moment, like men who have that to say which concerns no interloper.

Imagine, therefore, the universal confusion, when Dick suddenly burst their door open with a tremendous bang, and rushed into the saloon pursued by the furious barber. Half-a-dozen, at least, started to their feet, and placed their hands in their breast-pockets, as though to draw forth some hidden weapon ; two made for the door, and fastened it ; one threw up the window, as though about to trust himself to the chance of a twenty-foot fall : while Count Gotsuchakoff, with naked dagger, rushed at the trembling lad as he embraced the knees of M. de Crespigny. That gentleman, however, interposed his arm with a gesture the Russian could not pretend to misinterpret : and rolling up, map-like, the document which lay before him with particular carefulness and deliberation, requested Mr. Tipsaway to inform the company to what fortunate circumstance they were indebted for the honour of his unexpected visit.

Mr. Tipsaway shook his fist at his apprentice very feebly, and with lips as pallid with fear as they had been

a moment before with anger, expressed his contrition for the intrusion ; the foreign gents must needs pardon him, he was sure, when he told them that he had just received word that one of his best customers, Miss Backboard, of Acacia House—well known to the first families—had withdrawn her patronage, on account of the infamous conduct of the young reprobate now before them ; his righteous indignation had led him to chastise the youth with a stick snatched hastily from among those on sale in his front shop, and the ungrateful boy, instead of kissing the rod, had had the temerity, in escaping from it, to disturb the present company.

“Leave the room, Sir,” exclaimed M. de Crespigny sternly ; “we have nothing to do with your Mademoiselle Backboards, and the rest of it.”

Richard clung to his protector’s knees appealingly.

“The boy may stay,” added the Frenchman ; “he understands nothing of what we say.”

There were several murmurs from those present, and the Russian wrote a few words rapidly down, and pushed the slip to M. de Crespigny.

“I like the poor boy,” replied he, “and beg this favour of you for him for my sake.” To Gotsuchakoff, he wrote : “Fear not ; I will answer for the boy myself.”

The business of the day was therefore resumed, and sitting silent at the feet of De Crespigny, the astonished lad soon found himself in possession of the details of a projected insurrection, the importance of which was evident even to his uninstructed mind. The sitting did not break up till a late hour. M. de Crespigny had stayed behind the rest, to beg off his young favourite from his impending punishment, and was about to leave the room for that purpose, when Dick suddenly locked the door, and threw himself on his knees.

“I speak your language, M. de Crespigny, and have heard every word, or nearly so, of what has been said to-night.”

“Unhappy boy,” exclaimed the count, seizing his arm with a grasp of iron; “you know not what you have done, nor what penalty you have incurred. I tell you,” hissed he between his teeth, and with an awful sternness in his usually mild eyes—“I tell you you have spoken your own death-doom !”

“I have heard you many times before,” returned Dick in quiet unterrified tones, “and I have never whispered of aught that has been said to anybody. You have been kind to me, Sir, and I would not betray your friends for a kingdom.”

“Alas, boy, I do believe you; but this matter does not rest with me; does not affect me only, but thousands. I tell you, since you have heard so much you must needs die !”

Pallid, determined, grim as severest Fate, and yet with a melancholy in his features born of pity and tenderness, De Crespigny drew the boy from his knees and held him at arm’s length.

“Will you go quietly with me, and be judged by fierce, inexorable, incredulous men, or shall I stab you here? Oh lies, how bitter is your fruit! Oh curiosity, how fatal is the pass to which thou hast brought this child! Fool, fool! why not at least have enjoyed thine own deceit without making me partaker of it? What besotted vanity could have consumed thee?”

“Oh Sir, it was no foolish vanity, but gratitude. I have used my knowledge only for your good, for your safety and for that of those you love. I tell you of myself, only to warn you against another far more dangerous than I. There is one who hears all your plots you do not dream of.”

"Who, boy?—who?" cried De Crespigny in a hoarse whisper. "Has this barber dared to turn traitor? Are there spies without?"

"No, Sir; there are spies within. Count Gotsuchakoff——" The boy involuntarily stopped, so awful was the expression of the Frenchman's face as Dick pronounced this name; it seemed to become sea-green with rage and hatred. "Beware what you say, boy," murmured he with difficulty, so choked was his voice with passion—"beware; your words are bullets—daggers. What of the Russian? What of the deaf and dumb?"

"He is neither deaf nor dumb," returned Richard solemnly; "I heard him speak not forty-eight hours ago. He never burns those slips on which you write!"

"You lie, you lie, boy; I have seen him burn them with my own eyes!"

"Not so, Sir; he burns other slips instead. I saw him do so thrice this very evening. He keeps the real ones in his pocket-book. If he were searched this moment you would find them there."

"Great Heaven! can this be true?" exclaimed De Crespigny. "The place, the very hour, he holds in our handwriting; the money and arms he knows, to a franc, a musket. The men—oh Heaven, and the women, the poor helpless women that this monster has the power to make desolate. Give me the brandy, boy. I can't believe it. For thirty years a spy, and playing mute—for thirty years! Yet some such wretch we must have had amongst us. So many plans betrayed, so many schemes abortive! Once more, good youth, upon your sacred soul, is this the truth? Answer as you would answer at the judgment seat, *did* this man speak?"

"He did; so help me Heaven!"

"M. de Crespigny filled another glass with brandy, and

tossed it off; then put his cloak on with deliberation, and passed out of the room. The front shop was tenantless, but he delayed there to call the barber, and extract from him, not without difficulty, a promise that his apprentice should not be beaten. Then parting, with a polite good-night, and even an uncommon gaiety, the Frenchman left the house.

The next day (Thursday), and the day after that, the foreign gentlemen frequented Mr. Tipsaway's as usual, with one single exception, and the confusion of tongues in the smoking-saloon was as great as ever. On the third day the barber inquired of Herr Singler what had become of Count Gotsuchakoff, to which the German answered that he did not know, and that his friends were getting exceedingly anxious about him. That same evening, as Mr. Tipsaway was picking out the plums of the *Dispatch* newspaper, and distributing them, as his custom was, on Saturday nights, to the household in general, he came upon this remarkable paragraph :

“ *Mysterious Murder.*—Last night, as the policeman on duty was passing down Blank Street, Poplar—a rather unfrequented part of that neighbourhood—he perceived some person crouching down behind a hoarding, as if for the purpose of concealment. Upon turning his bull's eye upon this object, he found it to be a dead body, and by the dress and complexion, apparently that of a foreigner. Being carried to the police station, and examined, there was found a small wound in the left breast, as if made with a stiletto or other sharp and narrow instrument, which it is the surgeon's opinion could not have been inflicted by the deceased himself. A valuable watch and some money were found upon his person, as well as a pocket-book with various entries in it in the Russian tongue. The body had the appearance of hav-

ing lain in the position in which it was found for several days. At present, the affair is enveloped in mystery, but the police are actively engaged in its elucidation."

"Upon my word of honour," exclaimed Mr. Tipsaway slapping his thigh, "I'm half inclined to believe that that must be our poor old dummy. At all events, I'll go to Poplar this very night, and set my mind at ease. Frizzle —no, you're a fool, and will be all night about it—Smith, you run out, and get me a cab this instant. Smith, don't you hear? Why, what the deuce is the matter with the boy?—he's all of a quiver."

"I don't wonder at it," interposed Mrs. Tipsaway, "the heat of this room is something quite insupportable. If you will just leave him to himself, while I open the window, he'll be right in half a minute, and by the time you have put on your boots."

"Smith, what do you know about this?" whispered the woman vehemently, as soon as they were left alone. There has been some foul play with this Russian, boy, and you know something of it. I heard you talking to De Crespigny on Wednesday night; ay, that I did. I told you what would come of trying to deceive Martha Tipsaway. I may save you, even yet, you wretched boy," continued the barber's wife, with a vagueness of patronage that curiosity, however powerful, could scarcely excuse; "only tell me all you know, from beginning to—"

"*Will* you get me that cab, Smith, or will you not?" roared Mr. Tipsaway, reappearing with his great-coat and comforter. "What *is* the meaning of this conduct, Sir? Why are you always fainting, and my wife always engaged in loosening your neckerchief?"

Dick snatched up his cap, and rushed into the street without one word of reply.

The clock hands in the front-shop were then together at the eleventh hour, and Mr. Tipsaway calculated that before that hour struck his vehicle would have arrived.

“I believe that that is the stupidest boy we ever had,” exclaimed the barber peevishly, at the expiration of the first ten minutes.

“I don’t agree with you,” replied his lady curtly, not lifting her eyes from the *Housekeeper’s Best Adviser*, of which recondite volume, however, she had not mastered a single sentence; “you might thank your stars if you were only one-half as sharp, Mr. T.”

“Sharp or not,” observed Mr. Tipsaway, maddened by delay—“sharp or not, I’ll give him such a supper of black-thorn before he goes to bed this night as he will find rather indigestible, as sure as—”

“As sure as you are a wise man, Mr. T.,” interrupted his consort, “there; you couldn’t finish your sentence better than that. And not being a wise man, why you won’t give it him; simply because the lad is never coming back again to give you a chance.”

“Never coming back again!” echoed Mr. Tipsaway, sinking into an arm-chair as though overwhelmed by this intelligence; “why, he’s got two tortoise-shell combs in his pocket almost new. I’ve owed that boy a tanning these five weeks—one day or another—and put it off, and put it off, and put it off, through good nature, and because I thought it best to pay him for all at once, and now—— Oh lor, if I had but known.”



CHAPTER XIV.

THE MYSTERY OF MR. JONES.

LONDON by night ! What a brilliant and animated vision to those who, knowing nought of its guilt and wretchedness, are whirled from comfortable homes to gorgeous theatres, and mark the ceaseless throng from their carriage windows as though it were itself but a scenic pageant ! What a world of gilded vice and gay excitement to those who seek it, purse in hand, and with heated faces carefully averted from its darker side ! What a wilderness of woe to those who, houseless and moneyless, pace wearily its splendid streets, without one of its million lights disclosing to them the features of a friend ! For such, no loneliness of desert, no solitariness of sailless sea, can afford so utter an isolation as that infinite ocean of unknown fellow-creatures. The heart of London throbs indeed, as has been said, but to the poor wanderer in its stony ways in a manner far other than human. Among a thousand faces there is not one that says unto him, "I pity you ;" not one, "What makes you look so wretched and so wan ?" Pleasure is there—real pleasure—with bright eyes and radiant cheeks ; and a hideous and unreal pleasure pursues him, with eyes that are spirit-lamps, with cheeks that are painted skin. Wealth is there, in profusion, in superfluity, made hideous by contrast with the abject

poverty that stoops to pick the orange-peel from the kennel. Prudence is there, with many a cardinal virtue, all with suspicious looks and buttoned pockets, and putting their confidence in Order only, who is there also, blue-coated, and with truncheon in hand. But as for human sympathy, for any sign of common brotherhood to be encountered in six miles of human countenances in London by night—you must apply to the relieving officer of the district, who undertakes the supply of those articles ; and be sure, oh wanderer, that it *is* his district, and that you do not put off the application until after business hours !

Poor Dick ran on and on for several minutes, only intent upon setting as many streets as possible between himself and the too inquiring Mrs. Tipsaway, and accompanied the whole of that distance by the image of Count Gotsuchakoff, as he was found behind the hoarding in Poplar with the stiletto wound in his left breast. Something had prompted the boy to avoid M. de Crespigny, ever since that Wednesday night when he had revealed to him the treachery of his associate, and now he felt a sort of comfort in that he had done so ; it was something that he had not touched that hand, which—Dick did not dare to finish the thought, but sped on the faster upon his way, as though to leave it and the phantasm which dogged his side behind him. The further he ran, however, the more perceptible and hideous it grew, and it was not till he had entered one of those temples dedicated to the grosser Bacchus, and drank off a glass of gin, that he found out how largely exhaustion and weariness enter into the composition of the impalpable. One bad spirit, in fact, drove out the other ; but the new arrival was only too familiar with poor Dick by this time, and agreed with him perfectly well.

Refreshed and strengthened, at least temporarily, the

lad inquired of a policeman where he was, and receiving the requisite intelligence, accompanied with a gruff advice to take himself home, availed himself, so far as he was able, of that recommendation. He retraced his steps through the now fast emptying streets—for he had been hitherto running due east—towards Golden Square, a place he had not visited since his emancipation from China, many months ago, and standing in the silent roadway there, contemplated his former home. No such feelings thronged his bosom as are said to affect young gentlemen of property upon revisiting the paternal residences from which they have been absent for a long vacation or so. There was no old and favourite dog to treat him with indifference as a stranger, or—still more objectionably—to tear him where he stood. Neither could he have been compared to some prodigal about to piteously appeal for any husks that might chance to be going in his uncle's establishment, for he had no intention of humbling himself before that relative. Still, as it was almost the only house in mighty London which contained any well-wisher of his, he did look up at it, and particularly at Mrs. Trimming's window with an interest that, at least, he did not entertain for the next door. It was a beautiful starlit night, and he perceived that the house-keeper's blind was down, and the gaslight in her chamber extinguished; the good old lady was evidently gone to bed—respectable white-sheeted bed, about which no dreams of houseless wanderers, with their last twopence spent in gin, were likely to mingle. If he threw up a pebble, it would probably only break the glass, and not her slumber, for Mrs. Trimming was that sort of lady who appreciates her supper and sleeps sound.

Hush! who is that who softly opens the *next* window,
his window—for Uncle Ingram and Adolphus both sleep

on the other side of the house—and gazes forth upon the dreaming city and the quiet stars? Their heavenly light slides down upon her golden hair, as though it had been watching for some such resting-place, and bathes in those tremulous eyes wherein stands the dew. It is Dick's angel watching over him, although she knows it not, and suggesting what is right by her mere presence. He will not become a vagabond—thinks he—but for the sweet sake of her will ask shelter, even at such an hour as that, of Mr. Mickleham. Her face is leaning on her fair round arms, and she is thinking—perhaps of Dick himself. Why has he never written to her according to his promise? Why has he not written to his mother? Sister Maggie is in her dinner-dress, and it is not a black one. Thank God for that; at least, then, his mother lives. But why are they two in London?—for he well knows that Maggie and she are not apart—why in Golden Square among his enemies? He longs to know all this; and by a whisper of his sister's name, a motion of his hands, a stepping into the full light from underneath the shadow of the railings, he might have known it all. But, alas! the black sheep has his pride, his obstinacy, his egotism, as the white sheep has; and rascality can stand upon its own dignity as ridiculously (if it were not for the pity of it) as respectability itself.

As it was Maggie even saw him crouching there—some abject wretch lashed by the bitter night-wind, as she deemed—and disappearing for an instant, she came forth again and stretching out her beautiful white arm and neck, cast out a shimmering something which clanged upon the stones close by him, and then the casement closed and she retired—her last good deed for that day being done. Dick took the half-crown, and kissing it, put it away in the same pocket that held his other treasures—the lock

of hair and handwriting of Miss Mickleham—and creeping off abashed, fled westward towards the home of the old clerk.

The population to which the policemen had before seemed to bear such insignificant proportion were now, in their turn, outnumbered by the guardians of the night, whose sauntering and heavy tread could be distinguished on the pavement—so still the night had grown—from the drunken stagger of the reveller, and the slithering footsteps of the wretched women who still haunted the corners of the streets. All sounds were magnified and repeated by the accommodating echoes. If an oath broke forth, it edified ears far distant from those to which it was specially addressed ; and if a laugh, it pierced with its shrill mockery unwilling hearers half a street away. Dick heard two verses of a bacchanalian song sung out before he met the solitary singer, who was walking quickly, too, as though he thought half-past one was time to be at home, if not in bed.

“ We can’t eat any more,
We can’t eat any more,
We can’t eat any mo-o-or,
But we’ll have some more to drink.

“ We won’t go home till morning,
We won’t go home till morning,
We won’t go home till mor—ning,
And perhaps not even then.”

Dick uttered a cry of delight as the roysterer passed him, for it was no other than Mr. Jones. That gentleman, on his part, was not less surprised at the rencontre, although when he was put in possession of the young gentleman’s forlorn condition (without, however, the particulars of it, and least of all, with the immediate cause of Dick’s de-

parture from the barber's) he was certainly less delighted. "Well, you must come home with me of course for to-night, Dick ; but you must not expect a palace, my good Sir. We are spacious when we do get there, but we are a precious long way up. If our apartments give you the idea of having been taken unfurnished, you must not be surprised, Master Richard. We have preferred to wait for the very best things that can be got, rather than to be supplied at once by upholstering mediocrity." While the young man, wrapped in his loose cloak, thus discoursed sardonically concerning the lodgings whither they were bound, Dick felt, in spite of himself, a shudder creeping over him, as he recognised in the speaker an unmistakable likeness to the popular representations of no other than the enemy of mankind. Alas ! there was no doubt about it ; there were the high shoulders, the mocking eyes, the demoniacal smile that had haunted many a dream of his, and, for all he could see to the contrary, the elongated ears might be touching the roof of that hat, and the tail be wound like a rope around that body. It seemed only of a piece with Mr. Jones's Satanic character, that he should appear pleased with the impression that he had evidently produced upon his young friend, and should give expression to a prolonged "Ha ! ha !" (of a demoniac character), which, beginning at the top of the Haymarket, seemed to die away in the neighbourhood of Apsley House.

" You seem tired and out of spirits, my poor Dick," observed Mr. Jones, unlocking a street door ; " but we are at home at last. If Queen Lucidora has not retired to her imperial couch, we will make her give us supper."

Up and still up they toiled, until they came to the fourth story, which was composed of one enormous

chamber, lit by a sky-light, and otherwise rather over provided with windows, and of another very small apartment without any window at all. They entered the former without knocking, and a rather pretty young woman, who had been sitting by the fire, came forward with a yawn to welcome Mr. Jones. Though she was not so *very* pretty, nor he, as has been said, so divinely beautiful, yet Dick, who gazed upon them unobserved by the lady, was instantaneously reminded, by their embrace, of the meeting of Cupid and Psyche. The latter, it is true, was in a yellow dressing-gown, and without her wreath and wings, and the former wore his hat more upon one side than became a deity of such a reputation as the god of love—but there they were, nevertheless, as Dick had seen them pictured scores of times.

“Lucidora, I have brought a young gentleman who wants some supper. Mr. Richard Arbour, let me introduce you to Mrs. Jones.”

The start which that young lady gave at this announcement, before she bounded into the little room to reassume her gown, wiped out the Psyche from Dick’s retina, and presented in her stead Diana surprised at her ablutions by Acteon ; Mr. Jones, too, only wanted the horns to be the counterpart of that ill-fated hunter.

The lad sank feebly into a chair, quite worn out by fatigue and want of food, and not without a suspicion that his wits were leaving him.

“Here is beer, my lad, and here is bread and cheese,” cried his host, producing those articles from a cupboard : “they will put a little life into you while supper is getting ready. These herrings are only waiting to be cooked—”

“Those herrings are for *to-morrow*,” observed Lucidora, reappearing from the inner room, in a somewhat more

decorated style of dress. "How *could* you bring the young gentleman here at this time in the morning?"

"Well, I *could* have brought him in a cab, if I had had the money, but as it was, he brought himself, although with difficulty. He's tired to death and must lodge here for the night at least."

"Lodge *where?*" inquired the young lady, with a not imperceptible toss of her raven ringlets.

"Rebecca the Jewess, as I live," thought Dick, "when defying the Templar Brian de Bois Guilbert!"

"In that corner yonder, and in Cleopatra's galley," replied Mr. Jones sonorously, pointing to a something between a boat and a horse-hair sofa which stood at the extremity of the apartment. "Pillofed on the leopard skin of Bacchus, and covered with Hamlet's cloak, and the robe of Cardinal Wolsey when a-dying, he will need not the bed of down, nor the mattress said to be of horse-hair, but which too commonly is stuffed with wool."

"Now, don't go on so like a ranting play-actor," returned Lucidora peeviously; "don't you see that you quite frighten the lad? I wish, young gentleman, we had something better to offer you than cheese."

"Give him rabbit, the rabbit of Wales," observed Mr. Jones with dignity. "I think I could even eat a piece of such an animal myself."

"Toasted cheese, at two in the morning!" exclaimed the hostess; "why you will both have the nightmare."

And in Dick's case that prophecy was certainly fulfilled to the letter.

He woke up, in the galley, from a deadly combat with Mark Antony and the Prince of Darkness, to find his host and hostess at breakfast, and that it was half-past ten o'clock on Sunday morning.

So exhausted was he even after that long rest, that he did not feel equal to conversation, but lay upon his ex-tempore bed with half-shut eyes, taking lazy note of the apartment and its contents. The quantity of light in the room, intercepted only at the side windows by half-a-dozen very tall chimneys, together with the vast expanse of house-roofs seen from where he lay, gave him the notion of being in a glass box, placed upon the very top of London, and that it was lucky he had his clothes on, for that getting out of bed would have otherwise been a public impropriety. There was a machine like an enormous magic lantern immediately opposite to him, from which depended a vast black curtain. The carpetless floor was strewed with theatrical dresses of all descriptions, and several roughly coloured scenes, as for a dramatic representation, were leaning against the walls. The chair upon which he had thrown his coat overnight he now perceived to be three wooden steps painted to represent the base of a statue ; and Mr. Jones himself was seated not upon a chair but upon a priestess's tripod. Nothing that he saw, in fact, appeared to be real or natural except the herrings, and those were disappearing from the scene with pantomimic velocity.

“I say, just you leave one for the boy,” remarked Lucidora, as Mr. Jones evinced a disposition to attack the final fish. “Since you mean him to stay here, you must give him enough to eat, although it's my belief he will never pay for his keep.”

“Mrs. T.,” responded the other—and “Why does he call her Mrs. T., I wonder?” thought the attentive Dick —“you women know nothing whatever of business, except its mere decorations—its accessories ; you understand the flying buttresses and the capitals well enough, but the walls and the pillars must be left to the great

architect man. What did Sunstroke give you per head for fairies when you were Titania?"

"Just five shillings, and out of that I had to find the gauze and spangles."

"Which we used afterwards, once or twice, upon other occasions," remarked the other drily. "Well, if mere supers fetch a crown a piece, what do you think of Ganymede being carried off by the Eagle? There's a bird stuffer in Holborn who will lend me one for two-and-six, which will be just the thing. What do you think of Hyacinth with a Dutch cheese in his hand playing at the Discus with Apollo, eh? That young fellow would look uncommonly well upon a—— By-the-bye," cried Mr. Jones, interrupting himself, and turning a little pale, "it is just within the bounds of possibility that he may not be a novelty in the market after all. Sunstroke is always on the look-out, I know.—Dick, my boy; Dick, I say, are you awake? We want to know whether you have ever been on a slide."

"On a slide?" ejaculated the boy, sitting up in the galley and rubbing his eyes. "Oh yes, I have been on a slide many scores of times."

"*The deuce you have,*" replied Mr. Jones in a tone of disappointment; "and yet you haven't been in town a twelvemonth, eh? There you see, Lucidora, didn't I tell you how they would jump at such a model as that?"

"I have never been on a slide in town," replied Dick with simplicity; "only in winter-time, at Messrs. Dot and Carriwun's, there was a pond——"

At this explanation, Lucidora went off into a convulsion of laughter, and performed an act of hysterical applause with her feet; Mr. Jones, forgetting he was on a tripod, and not on a chair with a back to it, fell backwards in a fit of frantic delight, and brought his head

into sharp contact with the floor; while Dick threw off the tiger-skin railway-rug and the red and black cloaks which served for bed-clothes, and joined in the contagious laugh which he himself had raised. He was about to perform his toilet—which consisted simply of putting on his coat—when Mr. Jones pointed to an enormous and highly ornamental metal basin, and made signs—being as yet choked with merriment—that he might, if he had a wish that way, therein wash his face and hands. Thankfully availing himself of this permission, the youth was about to plunge his ruddy countenance into the water for the second time, when he was arrested by a cry of admiration from his host. “One moment, Dick—just stop as you are one moment. Look at him, Lucidora—do just look at him before he leaps into the flood. Don’t you remember the young classical party who, having once beheld himself in the liquid element, could never afterwards be persuaded to admire anybody else? He’s Narcissus to the very life, is Dick, and a couple of guineas out of Sunstroke’s pocket, if he is a shilling. That’ll do, Dick: go it again, and never mind us.”

Dick did “go it” again, as directed, but not altogether without “minding.” It was a considerable trial for a youth of his modest disposition to be stopped in his ablutions, and have the attention of a strange lady drawn to his shut eyes and dripping features.

“When you’re washed, Dick, and had your breakfast, and if you have nothing else particular to do, I want you to put on a dress that will admirably become you, and to permit me to take your picture with that machine yonder.”

“And what in the name of wonder, is it?” cried Dick in an agony of curiosity; “and how is it that I

seem to have seen you and Mrs. Jones in so many other places and doing so many things. It's very foolish, I know, but somehow or other it strikes me that I was at your wedding."

Upon this, Dick's host and hostess had another access of delirious joy, lasting several minutes, after which the former took down a couple of stereoscopic slides, and handed them to his young friend. "You have not only seen our wedding, Dick—at least in many a shop-window—but the christening of our first and only baby. Where's the baby, Lucidora? Why, the poor child is actually standing on its head in the waste-basket! I performed the ceremony myself in full canonicals, which Shadrach would not let me have, by-the-bye, under three and six. We also do all the classical *poses plastiques* for Mr. Sunstroke. Nay, I *have* done—and a very difficult job it was—the very Fiend himself, as you may have seen."

"In short," said Dick, at a loss what name to give to this unexampled calling, "you are—"

"Photographees," replied Mr. Jones, pulling up his shirt-collar, "yes, and we flatter ourselves at the head of the profession. We are models for a stereoscopic photographer and you shall join us, and become a model too."





CHAPTER XV.

A MODEL TO BE AVOIDED.

AFTER breakfast, Lucidora was despatched to Mr. Sunstroke, to acquaint him of the treasure that awaited his inspection at his photographic rooms—for the apartments occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Jones were his, and had been fitted up, as we have seen, with an eye to art purposes rather than to domestic convenience. Better, however, is any unfurnished residence, gratis, than the most stately dwelling-place and rent therewith; and the two models lived cheaply and contentedly in their glass-house—throwing no stones at others, we will hope—and were even enabled to accommodate a young friend in addition, as we have seen. Their home and their place of business were thus conveniently amalgamated. From sunset until after breakfast, all was domesticity and private life; but in the daytime, the nuptial-chamber was devoted to collodion and the black art, and the larger room became a theatre for *tableaux*.

Those out-door picnics, so redolent of the leafy summer-time, with which the stereoscope has made us so familiar, all had their origin in that art-attic over the Hay-market. There, couched at ease upon green baize, and under the shade of canvas woods, those July revellers held their pasteboard feasts, no matter what the weather or the season. There, too was temporarily reared the

long-drawn aisle and fretted vault of that well-known cathedral—which has drawn many a tear from the impressionable medieval eye, stereoscopically deceived—wherein those white robed choristers (at one-and-six) are swinging censers, with bowed head, before their bishop. And there, above all, those classical statues, with which we are so well acquainted, more lifelike than the greatest triumphs of Grecian art, reversed the miracle of Pygmalion, and turned from flesh and blood to marble.

In such a very slight flesh-coloured garment, that the wearer felt excessively alarmed lest Mrs. Jones should re-enter the apartment before he changed it, the compliant Dick was now regarding himself in the big basin. Around his brow was a wreath of water-lilies made of green and white cotton, which bobbed about his face, and tickled him, like a night-cap with a too luxuriant crop of tassels. A piece of blue calico was looped about him, much as a window-curtain is festooned to right or left: while into his countenance was thrown as vivid an expression of self-admiration as his sense of the lowness of the temperature and the falseness of his own position would permit the lad to assume.

“A little more forward, if you please, Narcissus,” observed Mr. Jones, who was in charge of the camera; “not so much as that, though; thank you. Don’t laugh, whatever you do, or you’ll be a dreadful object. Good Heavens! what are you scratching your ear for? Pooh, pooh, a model must never itch! Couldn’t you stand on one leg for a little, in order to give a lightness to the attitude?”

“Not without tumbling into the basin,” rejoined Dick; “I couldn’t indeed.”

“Ah, well, we will try that afterwards, then; it will not look ill as a specimen of an instantaneous—I say, you

mustn't wink your eyes, Narcissus ; you must stare steadily and fondly upon the water, please——That's not a bad notion, though, I was going to say, for Sappho throwing herself off the Lesbian rock into the sea. Mrs. T.—Mrs. Jones I mean—shall be Sappho, only it will spoil her clothes a good deal, unless she does it in a bathing-gown ; and you shall be Phaon. Now, you must not move a hairsbreadth, Dick, for the photograph is just going to be taken ; but don't hold your breath so much, or you will be purple, and there is no knowing what queer colour that may turn to in the photograph."

In a couple of minutes, Narcissus the original was permitted to reassume his less classical garments, and Narcissus the copy was lying in the dark chamber, steeped in an offensive preparation.

"You did it capitally," observed Mr. Jones with triumph ; "and now it only remains to name your reward. Shall it be beer and tobacco, or shall we go to the Zoological Gardens ?"

"Neither, thank you," replied Dick, "just now. I should prefer, if you don't mind—although you have forborne to inquire into my own recent history—to learn why it is you sometimes call Mrs. Jones, Mrs. T. ?"

For a moment the photographee looked a little annoyed, but immediately recovering his good-humour, observed ; "With all my heart, lad, for you are sure to know it some day, sooner or later. Come and sit down by the fire, and listen to the history of one who has been neglected by his age ; and draw the corks of that couple of bottles before we begin, Dick, for I hate to be interrupted by noise. When I went about the country with a couple of big candles and a Shakspeare, giving that admirable course of readings from the immortal bard, of

which it was justly remarked by the *Land's End Thunderer*—But there, I dare say you never heard of them. Well, when I went about elevating the masses by the lever of Dramatic Elocution, I always began the entertainment by a dissertation against noise."

By this time the beer was drawn and emptied into a huge "pewter," into which the Classical Model, having dipped his features, and emerged from the foam thereof after the manner of Cytherean Venus, commenced as follows:—

"If Locke's theory be untenable, and one baby be really brought into the world with instincts and characteristics differing from those of another baby, it is certain that the individual who now addresses you, was born a gentleman. I was a precious high chap in my notions from my very cradle, and I shall always be a precious high chap until I die. It was therefore monstrously inconsistent of Nature, having thus endowed me with qualities only befitting an exalted station, to permit my father to be the proprietor of an inconsiderable eating-house in Whitechapel; and whatever grieves I have since come to—and they have been numerous—I have attributed, and, I think, with justice, to Nature only. It may be easily imagined that my poor parent—a good enough man in his line, which was, however, mainly confined to mutton-pies and sheep's trotters, with a sprinkling of a singular viand denominated Chitterlings, the origin and nature of which are shrouded in mystery—was quite unable to appreciate the boon which had been conferred upon him in an offspring such as myself. But my mother—ah, my mother! [here Mr. Jones appeared to be overcome with emotion, and once more buried his face for an extraordinary length of time in the pewter] that old lady was a regular trump, and that's all about it."

"Ah," murmured Dick in a sympathetic voice, "that's just like *my* mother."

"Well, I cut away from the tripe business, and my mother brought me back again, and then I cut away again. Then I went to school, and cut away from that. Then I was bound apprentice to a sign-painter—for I had always a yearning towards the Fine Arts—and I cut away from him. And at last, when I had made trial, in short, of most things that a lad might try on *terra firma*, I cut away from *that*, and went to sea. My connections, generally, were of a narrow order of mind, and didn't appreciate me. When I was quite young, they only shook their heads, and remarked, that, "after all, I was nobody's enemy but my own." But when I grew older, and wanted a little money from them now and then to start afresh, then I became *their* enemy, and they shut their doors against me coincidentally with their pockets. When I returned home to Whitechapel from my first voyage, my father was very far from killing a fatted calf in honour of that event ; if it hadn't been for my mother, in fact, I should have had nothing for supper that night except cold chitterlings. He even expressed himself as owing Nature a grudge for having presented him with such a son, whereas, as I have demonstrated, the grievance lay precisely the other way ; while, in conclusion, he gave it as his opinion that I was nothing less than a "black sheep"—his very metaphors, you perceive, being drawn from those shambles whence he procured the raw material for the carrying on of his ignoble profession. In England, said he, there was no pasturage, he thanked Heaven, proper for cattle of that sort, but there was a portion of the globe recently discovered, especially adapted, and as it seemed to some, providentially designed, for the accommodation and sustenance of Black Sheep—namely,

Australia. If I was content to be exported thither, he would pay my passage: If I was not— There was a certain choleric vulgarity, in short, about my respectable parent—attributable, in some degree, as I have always endeavoured to hope, to his over attachment to pigs' puddings—that led him into language which, from respect to his memory, I will not repeat.

“Wishing, however, to act a dutiful part, and being also entirely unprovided with the means for carrying on a domestic war, I acceded to the parental terms. I embarked for the Antipodes, and was accompanied on board the *Betsey Jane* by my father himself, impelled to that step by ardent affection, doubtless, and the desire of bidding me farewell, but also by the lingering suspicion that I might otherwise spend my passage money more agreeably than in maritime travel. The ship was but a small one for so long a voyage, and not well officered: the watches, particularly at night, being very ill kept. My berth was so small, that when we reached the Tropics it grew unbearable, and when it was fair, I used to lie on deck instead of below, with only the stars above me.

“One particularly still and solemn night, when I chanced to take up my quarters close beside the steersman, I felt as disinclined for sleep as for exertion. I lay in a torpid state with my eyes open, but with my senses partially shut, and with my thoughts occupied indeed, yet not under my control, but wandering at their own wondrous will in the past and in the future, to the annihilation of time and space. The only sounds that broke the universal silence which reigned over sky and sea, were the turning of the wheel beside me, and the clanking of the rudder-chains, at first at irregular intervals, and with more or less of violence, but presently becoming quite mono-

tonous: for the helmsman had fallen asleep, and left that indifferent vessel, the *Betsey Jane*, entirely to her own devices. Then the heavens grew cloudy, and the stars dimmer and dimmer, and the wind began to rise; and still lay I with my face skyward, conscious but unconcerned.

“All of a sudden, there loomed something monstrous far above my face, shutting out the clouds from my sight, and I heard a noise other than that of the rippling of the waves about our stern—it was the sound which the cutwater of a vessel makes in a freshening breeze. In half a second, I became fully conscious that the bowsprit of some huge ship was passing over us, and that in another half-second the *Betsey Jane* would be run down with all her crew complete. Casting my cloak from off me, I leaped at the rigging which hung about the mighty beam, and thereby managed to climb up on it, and thence, with cautious trepidation, like a cat in walnut shells upon the ice, on to the forecastle of the stranger. When I had reached so far, the *Betsey Jane* was not to be seen. She had not been run down, for I had not felt the slightest shock, but had escaped by the skin of her teeth, and with the loss of one of her most respectable passengers.

“I was not at all surprised, after what had happened, to find the look-out man of the stranger also asleep at his post; but it did disgust me, when I woke him for the purpose of explaining the circumstances, to see him throw up his arms with a great shriek, and run below exclaiming that the devil was on the forecastle; though, if the thing had happened in these stereoscopic days, there might have been some foundation for the libel. As it chanced, I had got on board an Australian vessel bound for the London Docks, where I presently arrived, after a six months’ sea-voyage almost unprecedented in the barrenness of its results.

“My reception in Whitechapel, as may be easily imagined, was not enthusiastic; but on the other hand, I arrived just in time to receive the bequest of the travelling wild-beast show from my maternal uncle; it goes about the country under my name until this day, but as you are aware, I did not long remain its proprietor. The position was not, perhaps, of a sufficiently gentlemanlike character to suit my aspiring nature. You would have liked it, would you, Dick? Perhaps so; I have often regretted myself, that I should have been born so precious high. The very same thing occurred when I subsequently took up the dog-trade. A puppy’s tail, Dick, take my word for it, is not a mouthful for a gentleman: and yet, unless they are bitten off, “the Fancy” will not have them at any price. I dare say I had eaten many a one in my respected papa’s pies; but then the cooking makes such a deal of difference. That good man died at the very period when I failed in dogs—a circumstance which redounds to his credit as a man and a father—and paid the debt of nature just in time to enable me to settle with my creditors. My poor mother was not left quite so well provided for as might have been expected—for my father’s will, it seems, had always been in my favour, although his way had sometimes been so unpleasant—and she therefore very wisely determined to take a situation as—as—as housekeeper in a gentleman’s family; and I am bound to say that she has been of considerable use to me while in that position.”

“Is it Mrs. Trimming?” asked Dick with some hesitation.

“That is the very party,” observed Mr. Jones, “and a very nice old party she is. It was thought that your respected uncle might have a prejudice about her being the mother of such a—— What shall I say?”

“Such a precious high chap,” suggested Dick with gravity.

“Just so,” returned Mr. Jones; “and therefore we have kept the connection dark, as far as he is concerned.”

“And Mrs. Jones being your wife, that is why you call her Mrs. T.,” observed Dick.

“Well, the fact is, she is, and she isn’t,” returned the photographee, revisiting the tankard. “My mother don’t know about it, you see; *she* has her prejudices—I find so many people have about so many things—and so I keep that dark too. But, hark! I hear Lucidora’s footsteps upon the stairs, and, if I mistake not, that of our proprietor also.”

As he finished speaking, Mrs. Jones entered the room, accompanied by Mr. Sunstroke, a little old man with an immense pair of gray moustaches. He was always stroking and petting these, as though to keep them in good-humour, and dissuade them from flying away with him—a proceeding for which they looked admirably adapted—and he stood now in the doorway with one of them in each hand, and with his head very much on one side, regarding Dick with his keen, critical eyes, as though the lad were some object of *vertu*, of which he had been offered the first refusal.

“I don’t like that little mole on his left cheek,” observed the photographer, after a prolonged investigation.

“Ah, that’s where I differ from you!” returned Mr. Jones with coolness. “Without that mole, he would be commonplace enough, perhaps! but with it—being as it is, a beauty rather than a blemish, too—he becomes unique at once.”

“Yes,” replied the artist drily, “so unique that everybody must needs know him again, and he will only serve

us for one *pose*. The public can't be expected to believe that Hyacinth, Ganymede, Narcissus, and the whole army of mythological youth, were *all* distinguished by a mole upon their left cheeks, you know ; it's quite ridiculous."

"Suppose," suggested Mr. Jones sardonically, "that you sometimes took his right profile instead of his left."

"There's something in *that*," assented the little artist candidly ; "and the young fellow is not altogether without expression, I must confess."

Dick, indeed, was looking volumes of astonishment, as well he might, while this question of his personal valuation was being settled, and felt much relieved when the bargain was concluded, and he found himself pledged to give some half-a-dozen "sittings" to Mr. Sunstroke—although he never *sat* except in that celebrated pose of the "Boy Extracting a Thorn"—at thirty shillings for the single figure, and a pound for one of a group ; one half of which remuneration was to go to Mr. Jones, in return for food and lodgment.

"Well," observed the artist, when these terms had been finally arranged, "I should have come up here this morning at all events, independently of our classical young friend. I have gone into a new line since I was with you yesterday morning. The stereoscopic business is extending, my friends—is ramifying. You remember that prison-tour of ours, Trimming, last summer, wherein we photographed about five hundred as ill-looking scoundrels as the sun ever shone upon, in order that justice might keep mementos of their visit—duplicates of their expressive physiognomies. Well, I was sent for, special, by the police, last afternoon, to do another job for them. It has been determined, it seems, in the case of all unclaimed—However, just look at that! it speaks for itself, don't it?"

Mr. Sunstroke drew a slide out of his pocket, placed it in a stereoscope, and handed it to Mr. Jones for inspection ; then stroking his moustaches with great vehemence as if to make up for his neglect of them while arranging the instrument, he awaited the verdict of his photographee.

“It’s the most lifelike, at least deathlike thing,” cried Mr. Jones, “I ever—— But here, Dick, what do *you* say about it ; your opinion, as that of an outsider, should be better worth having? Isn’t that a splendid specimen of what art can do towards strengthening the hands of justice? A score of years after that mortal body has dropped to pieces, the lineaments of the dead man’s features will remain as you see them now, to be recognised by any——”

“Gotsuchakoff!” cried the lad with a shriek of terror, casting the instrument upon the ground, and cowering into a corner of the wall, as if he had been struck.

Mr. Sunstroke bounded forward, but too late to save the already shattered slide ; Lucidora rushed into the little chamber for a jug of water to throw over the fainting boy ; but Mr. Jones seized possession of the camera, and bidding everybody keep away from the lad upon their lives, proceeded to take an instantaneous photograph of him—which afterwards became one of the most popular of the “ghost-slides,” under the very taking title of *The Spectre-smitten—a Study!*





CHAPTER XVI.

IN TROUBLE.

DAVING thus involuntarily commenced his profession—having achieved his first stereoscopic success in a manner at least as accidental as that by which the artist in the story painted his cloud—namely, by throwing his brush at it—Dick pursued it with assiduity and pleasure. It was not very hard work, even while it was going on, and wet days and dark days were holidays in the photographic calendar; moreover it was rather pleasant to recognise himself in shop windows, and hear the criticism spassed by the vulgar upon his classical attitudes. Mr. Sunstroke's manner was kind, and his anecdotes amusing enough, whenever, at least, there was anything like a good light. Mr. Jones was always chatty and agreeable; and Lucidora, although she suffered occasionally from depression of spirits, imparted that feminine flavour to the general conversation without which the society of the greatest wits is said to be imperfect. She evidently liked the youth, and her manifestation of that feeling produced at once its effect on Dick, whose heart was indeed a very mirror for reflecting the least good-will that happened to be shown to it; but Mr. Jones monopolised most of the talk when Mr. Sunstroke was not with them, and studiously confined it to the airiest themes, so that the lady's disposition and

character remained almost as unknown to Dick as on the night when he had first seen her. He never chanced to be left alone with her—Mr. Jones declaring that he was jealous of Narcissus—until a certain morning some weeks after his arrival, when the photographee had gone out for some twenty minutes to his *costumier* Shadrach, to hire that very hussar uniform in which we have so often seen him proposing to the young lady in the conservatory.

“Richard Arbour,” exclaimed she, the instant that the street-door was shut, and without the least hesitation or introduction, “would you like to see your mother once more before she dies ?”

Dick, who, very much in dishabille, was fitting a gilded wing on to a flesh-coloured shoulder-strap, uttered such an inarticulate cry of grief and terror, that the woman’s eyes, which had looked hard and harsh enough when she first spoke, grew tender at once. “Hush,” she went on, “it is not your fault, or at least not *all* your fault. They have kept that from you which they should have told. Mr. Sunstroke does not want to lose you, because—Oh, Dick, we are all of us very selfish, and need much forgiveness ?”

“What of my mother ?” whispered the lad, as though he heard her not. “What of my dear mother ?”

“She is ill—*very* ill,” returned the other. “I am sure of that by what I heard last night. Richard was told so by Mrs. Trimming. She is in Golden Square, not ten minutes’ run from this, Dick. To-morrow, Eternity itself may be between you. I have known what it is to miss a mother’s blessing ; I pray you may never know it, too, and that is why I speak.”

“I will tell her,” sobbed Dick, as he thrust on his shoes and coat—“I will tell her how you saved me from that loss.”

“Tell her nothing about me!” exclaimed the girl with passionate shrillness. “Forget me and all that belongs to me when you leave this room. Let not the thought of her be ever mixed up with thought of me, unless you would defile your mother’s memory!”

Hurried and panic-struck as the boy was through the news he had just heard, he ran up to the wretched woman as she poured forth her bitter words, and lifted up his face that she might kiss him. But she turned away, and put him aside with her hand, crying that her lips were poison; and again bade him depart while there should yet be time.

Dick needed no third warning, but fled down the stairs and into the street like one distracted. Fast as he flew, however, through the wondering crowds, and short as was the distance he had to traverse, the thoughts of what he had done, and what he had left undone, in regard to his beloved mother, passed through his conscience-stricken mind again and again. He had written to her but three times during the fifteen months or so that had elapsed since his departure from his uncle’s, giving indeed a cheerful view of his mode of life, but without specifying what it was, or mentioning any address whereby she might write to him, as he well knew she must have lovingly longed to do. Cognizant of her thraldom to Sister Maria, he had not ventured to disclose his whereabouts, for fear of its being revealed to Uncle Ingram, while his boyish pride revolted at the idea of confessing the actual nature of the humble pursuits in which he had been engaged. The sense of this unfeeling conduct, unmitigated now by any such excuses, possessed him wholly, and left no room for any dread of repulse or humiliation that he might meet with at the hands of his uncle or Adolphus. He only yearned to penitently cast himself at the feet of

her whose loving heart was breaking—perhaps broken—for his sake ; for *his*, to whom a stranger—and, by her own account, a far from exemplary character herself—had had to point out the cruelty of his silence, and to remind him of that parent who ought never to have been absent from his thoughts. What was drudgery in the china warehouse, or cold looks and cutting words from those who loved him not, that to escape them he should have added so heavily to that burden of sorrow which he well knew his mother had to bear ? Had *she* ever shrunk from a personal sacrifice by which the merest pleasure was to be conferred upon himself ? “ Wicked, wicked boy though I have been,” thought he, “ henceforth, at all events, mother, you shall never have cause to complain of the conduct of your son ! ”

Alas ! how unfortunate is it that these inward determinations to lead a new life—these little private improvement bills which are passed in the Parliament of our own hearts—can never be made sufficiently public ; and what is of greater importance, be got to be publicly believed, that we cannot cry, “ Let bygones be bygones,” and so become quits for what has passed, with all the world ! “ My behaviour, up to this time,” so our confession runs, “ has been, I must confess, abominable, and nothing less ; but henceforward, oh my fellow-creatures, I start upon a new tack and under an honest flag. I have got out of the smuggling cyclone, and mean to be driven for the future by no other winds than most straightforward ones. You and I, oh Revenue Cutter, called *Society*, have been hitherto at cross-purposes, but let us mutually salute. I feel already, in anticipation, the delights that will flow from a due obedience to the Excise laws.” But alas ! the *Society* ranges up with her guns double-shotted ; can be got to credit nothing of what is intended for the future ;

harps solely upon some past “Tubs,” illegally run by us, the deuce knows when, and takes us into harbour a condemned vessel, just as we were upon the point of commencing a career of universal usefulness.

Poor Dick was as full of pious resolves, as dead to any old temptations, when he turned the corner of the street leading into Golden Square, as any lad of his years could be in all London, when, lo and behold ! a hand is laid upon his collar, and a voice, as firm and quiet as that of conscience itself, remarks : “We’ve got you at last, young gentleman ; though we *have* been looking after you a plaguy long time !”

Thus spoke that efficient officer A 1 of the metropolitan police force, taking the steadiest gripe of the lad’s coat-collar, but managing, nevertheless, to convey no other idea to casual passengers, but that Dick and he were engaged in familiar conversation. “Now, I don’t want to throttle you, young Sir, nor nothing like it, so I do hope you have made up your mind to come along without a row.”

Poor Dick had certainly just been making up his mind to obey all constituted authorities, but the practical compliance thus immediately expected of him was rather embarrassing too.

“Why, you *must* have knowed,” continued A 1, in answer to his astonished look, “that this here was the very place of all places as you should never have come to. There’s one of us in every street out of that square yonder with his orders about you. There’s been a detective a-lolling against your area-gates for the last fortnight. Why, lawk-a-mercy ! to see you a-coming here in the broad daylight, as though there was nothing out against you, and no reward for your being took up—why, it do beat lettuces for greenness ; and you a conspirator too !”

“A conspirator!” echoed the wondering lad. “I don’t know what you mean indeed ; but I do pray that you will let me see my mother first, before you take me away.”

“Oh lor! Oh my! I can’t stand this,” exclaimed the policeman, taking out a pair of handcuffs from his pocket. “You *must* be a slippery chap to talk like that. For a young murderer and a foreign plotter to be so precious innocent and devotedly attached to his parent, is something too much.”

“Oh don’t, for God’s sake, don’t!” cried the agonised boy. “I have done nothing to deserve to wear those things, indeed. I had nothing to do with it—if it’s about Count Gotsuchakoff—except that I told upon him to Mr. De Crespigny to save the others.”

“Crepinny was his name, was it?” repeated the policeman. “Very good, Sir. Now, here is a vehicle which will take us to Poplar quite comfortably, and without the necessity of my putting on the bracelets.”

The policeman beckoned to a passing cab, and the two got into it. As soon as they were inside A 1 relaxed his gripe of the lad, who was weeping bitterly, and bade him be of good cheer, for that it was very unlikely that they would do more than lag such a young ‘un as he.

“Might I see the house, please?” cried Dick eagerly, as he perceived this change for the better in his captor’s feelings. “Might we drive slowly past, that I at least may see the house in which she is?”

“Mr. Arbour’s, I suppose you mean, my lad. Well, I dare say you may. Take the right hand of the square for Poplar, cabman. Here it is, then, and there isn’t much to look at, as I can see. The family’s all gone out of town since yesterday, I reckon. It’s all shut up, with the blinds down, and the rest of it, just as though somebody

had been and gone and died—— Hullo ! young fellow, keep up, will you ? ” ejaculated the policeman, as the boy fell heavily forward, and sunk down a lifeless heap upon the floor of the cab. Well, I thought he was too young to carry it through so precious cool as he began it. Drive as fast as you can, will you, cabby ? for your fare here has been and fainted slap bang off.”





CHAPTER XVII.

THE WITNESSES.

WHEN Richard Arbour "came to himself," as the phrase is, he also came to a series of policemen, beginning with A 1, an inspector, three reporters, two magistrates' clerks, and one magistrate, not to mention a considerable number of the general public—the last of whom were regarding him with a sort of terrified admiration, as though not altogether without hope that a lad of such bloody instincts might commit a homicide in the police court itself, for their especial edification and comfort. All the world, it seemed to Dick, were by this time more than fully informed of the active share he had taken in the assassination of the Russian count, as well as in the progress of Continental Revolution; his fame had, indeed, already gone forth from the police station, and was becoming metropolitan through the exertions of several scores of street intelligencers, while the telegraphic wires were even then doing their best to render it European. The police alone had hitherto been in possession of the lad's real name, but there was now no further need for even that concealment; and the Family Scapegrace was fulfilling his destiny with a vengeance.

Dick leaned forward in the dock with his face buried in his hands, to the great disgust of a gentleman in

the crowd connected with one of the illustrated papers—who had been sent for post-haste by a member of the force who was in his pay, in order to purvey the lineaments of so remarkable a criminal to the public—and with only the picture of that house in Golden Square before him with its drawn-down blinds. The thought of his dead mother—of the murder that he seemed to have in truth committed—prevented his feeling those apprehensions to which a person in his circumstances would otherwise have doubtless been a prey. There was even a certain miserable consolation in the fact, that this misfortune had befallen him, when, at least, it could wound that long-suffering heart of hers no more. The acute reporters were therefore in error, through whom some half a million of interested readers were informed next morning that “the youthful prisoner was deeply impressed by the sense of his disgraceful position, and the very serious nature of the charges brought against him.”

Dick listened to the details of his capture, which A1 delivered from the witness-box, as to some extraneous narrative which had not sufficient interest to win him for ever so short a space from his secret sorrow. It was an original and exciting story, too, and almost all new to him, describing his own superhuman cunning and personal agility, and thereby indirectly evidencing the sagacity and determination of his captor. When it was finished, there was quite a murmur of applause from the British public at the spirited conduct of their servant, and they regarded Dick with a renewed wonder, as being athletic as well as sanguinary beyond his years. If the lad had belonged to their own class in life, he would have had sympathy, and even commendation; but not being sown in the proper soil, nor of the crop that is

usually garnered in police courts, they looked upon him as a something of monstrous growth.

“Call the next witness,” said the magistrate.

Dick was leaning forward again in his old attitude, with his thoughts wandering away to the lock on the river, and the song which his mother had sung there on that last happy day they had spent together, when a familiar voice struck sharply upon his ear.

“Lor, Smith, and who’d a thought of seeing *you* here? Miss Backboard wrote as you were the wickedest boy she had ever seen, but I never believed her until this moment; though you did run off with the best tortoiseshell——”

“Hold your tongue, Sir,” interrupted the magistrate angrily; “how *dare* you speak to the prisoner? Who is this witness? What’s his name, officer? Why isn’t he sworn?”

“I can’t help it, you see, Smith,” groaned Mr. Tipsaway; “I *must* tell the truth, you know; it’s perjury——”

“Will you be sworn, Sir, or will you not?” roared the irascible magistrate. “Now what have you got to say about the prisoner?”

“Well, Sir, he was a good enough boy, as far as manners go, that I will say for him; but he was never a good cutter, Smith wasn’t——”

“Smith! who’s Smith?” interrupted the magistrate. “We are supposed to know nothing about Smith here. You must tell us your whole story, Sir, from beginning to end.”

Mr. Tipsaway smiled blandly, coughed deliberately, set his hair on end by means of two rapid passes of the fingers of the right hand, and commenced as follows: “My father’s name was William, Sir—the same as my own—but he had not the abilities even to rise above the

spear of an apprentice, though always in the best of establishments—but that, of course is all altered now, and what was fashion at that time——”

“Goodness gracious!” interrupted the magistrate, “this person is an idiot. This fellow ought never to have been brought here; he is not fit to give evidence; he——”

“And you never spoke a truer word nor that, Sir, Mr. Policeman, or my name isn’t Martha Tipsaway,” ejaculated a female voice from amid the crowd. “They *would* bring him along here, in spite of what I told ‘em, that they might just as well have brought the wig-block from our back-parlour.”

“I’ll commit that woman,” shrieked the magistrate, “as soon as this case is over; I’ll commit her as sure as I sit here.”

“And I’d like to know how they’ll get the case over, Mr. Po——”

Here Mrs. Tipsaway’s voice was arrested so suddenly, as to convey the idea of her windpipe having been compressed by the human thumb; and she herself was borne away, gurgling, from the presence, by two of the myrmidons of the law.

“Now look here, witness,” observed the magistrate, with that elaborate calmness which is the offspring of despair, and not of patience. “Do you know why you are put into that box, or do you not?”

Mr. Tipsaway, whose native intellect had been much shattered by the late outbreak on the part of his wife, and who did not know that he had been put into a box, or see any box into which he could be put, except a ridiculously small one of tin upon the magistrate’s table, contented himself with shaking his head slowly and mournfully, and pursing up his lips.

“Then take him away,” roared the magistrate, “and put somebody into his place who *is* a witness, and not a fool and a dummy.”

There was a soft and muffled sound, as of an *Æolian* harp, heard for half a second, and Mr. Frizzle, thrusting something hastily into his apron, was ushered into the pen recently occupied by his master.

Mr. Frizzle’s trepidation and modesty was so excessive, that he kissed the policeman’s thumb instead of the book that was presented to him for that purpose, and was rebuked by the official accordingly.

“That’s a very old trick,” remarked the magistrate indignantly; “and you had much better not try it on in *this* court, I warn you. Whether you kiss the book or not, mind, you are equally liable to a criminal prosecution.”

Mr. Frizzle’s bony knees knocked together audibly, and a low and not unmelodious whistle was heard to pervade the court.

“Officer, who is that whistling?” cried the magistrate sharply. “Who is it that dares to whistle while I am speaking?”

“Please, Sir, it’s the witness,” responded a policeman standing immediately beside the wretched Frizzle.

“The witness, was it?” returned the magistrate very quietly, and filling up a sheet of paper that lay before him. “Very good, witness.”

Mr. Frizzle whistled again.

“Whistle once more, witness, and your committal will be made out for one month’s hard labour. At present, you have got six days of it for contempt of court.”

“Please, Sir,” exclaimed the prisoner suddenly, “that young man cannot help whistling. He always used to whistle whenever Mr. Tipsaway swore at him, or Mrs.

Tipsaway boxed his ears. He always does it when he's frightened ; and I don't believe he could stop himself to save his life."

A loud and prolonged chirrup here broke forth from the witness-box, as though to corroborate this testimony.

"I never heard such an extraordinary case as this in all my life," whispered the magistrate to his clerk ; "the only person in the business who seems to have a grain of sense belonging to him, is the boy in custody.—Very well, then," added he aloud ; "you must whistle what you have to say, I suppose, witness, although it is not the usual way of giving evidence in a court of justice. Do you know the prisoner at the bar ?"

"Yes, Sir (whistle) ; and a very nice young man he is, Sir (whistle). I never knew anything against the young man, except—" Here the witness looked regretfully at Dick, and executed several bars in a tremulous and birdlike manner.

"You must tell the whole truth," cried the magistrate ; "you must not be swayed by pity for the prisoner. What is it that you know against him ? You must tell it all."

"He snipped a gentleman's ear-tip, Sir, the very last day but two as he was with us," replied Mr. Frizzle all in a breath ; after which he sighed, as one who has performed faithfully a painful duty.

"Who has the getting up of this case ?" inquired the magistrate. "Why are these imbecile persons permitted in the witness-box ?"

Upon this, a tall, intelligent-looking person, excessively heated—one Inspector Lynx, who did (metaphorically speaking) the Poplar murder—stepped forward, and explained that in his unavoidable absence a mistake had been committed ; it was the female Tipsaway that

ought to have been sworn, and not her husband or his apprentice, who could speak to nothing which implicated the young man in custody.

At this statement, Mr. Frizzle gave a feeble smile, and looked round the court, as if some tribute had been paid to his sagacity and usefulness; but upon being very sharply directed to stand down, he relapsed again, and tottered paralytically on to the bench behind the witness-box, where he was charitably permitted to remain, and whence an occasional smothered "toot" from his favourite instrument alone gave token of his presence and survival.

"So you want me after all, Mr. Policeman," observed Mrs. Tipsaway mounting the steps of the witness-box, as though she were a Boadicea, and it were her triumphal car. "Things mostly comes about as I expect 'em to do, somehow. Says I to that poor boy there; 'Now don't you be a-trying to deceive Martha Tipsaway, for no good will come of that, so sure as your name's Richard Smith,' which it was as far as was known to me at that present speaking. We took him in, Mr. Policeman, after a deal of begging and praying, for 'You have no character from your last place,' says I. 'No,' says he, 'but I am an orfing, and in want of the necessities of life,' or words to that effect. It was not a prudent thing to do, I am fully aweir of that, my lords and gentlemen"—observed Mrs. Tipsaway, parenthetically, and waxing into eloquence beyond her subject—"but I always was a chicken-hearted, Christian-like body, and we thought it would be made up to us in some way or another, which it hasn't been in this world, goodness knows. That lad was as comfortable as any one of us, with his three meals a-day, and table-ale, and what not, learning the fashionablest of styles, along with the re-

spectable young man who has just stood down, Mr. Policeman, who plays so sweetly upon the harpisacord, if that is the name you call it, being only a tortoiseshell comb and the thinnest of brown paper ; and a most ingenuous performance, as was allowed by Mr. de Cresspinny himself, a nobleman of France. The count was very fond of him, *he* was, and let him be in the smoking-room with the other emigrates who frequented our establishment, although unknown to him he spoke the French language like a native."

"Oh, this Frizzle was a favourite with these foreign gentlemen, and spoke the French language without their being cognizant of it, did he ?" interrogated the magistrate.

"Not as I am aweir on," observed Mrs. Tipsaway, with an air of lofty and abstracted coolness ; "I never heard tell that he did. I am here to speak of what I knows, and not of what I don't know. If I were asked my private opinion, I should say that Frizzle spoke no other than his native tongue, and that but very imperfectly. He could whistle like any foreign cock-y-olly bird, and a long sight better than most ; but as to his speaking the outlandish lingo of the gents in our——"

"It was the prisoner Smith, then, whom you would give us to understand was conversant with the French tongue, and that that fact was unknown to the emigrants who frequented your house ?"

"Smith was the word I *used*, Mr. Policeman," remarked Mrs. Tipsaway in a tone of pity and forbearance ; "which, if you will be good enough to listen to, attentive, and put it down in a book, you will find my words come true. One day when I was passing their door, permiscuous, when the others were gone, all except Mr. de Cresspinny and Smith—Smith, not Frizzle, *this* time, if you will be

so good as to keep it in mind—I heard summut as went cold to the pit of my stomach, so that I had to take half a glass of raw brandy almost immediate, a thing I never touches, except when *non compos*, Mr. Policeman, as I could get both sides of our house, and for the matter of that, many over the way, to prove. They was a-talking in a solemn sort of voice, as this might be”—and from this point Mrs. Tipsaway continued her evidence as though she were suffering from an aggravated form of quinsy sore throat.

“‘I can speak your language,’ says Smith, ‘as I saw him falling down upon his marra-bones through the key-hole, or else may I never speak another word.’ ‘The dickens you can,’ answers Mr. de Cresspinny; and I thought he would have choked the young chap, for all the world as Count Gotsuchakoff, as is dead and gone, did a few days before in that very room, which ought to have come first, Mr. Policeman. That was the poor Russian who was deaf and dumb. My husband used to call him all manner of names, although I always told him he had better be civil to everybody, for that there was no knowing; and, indeed, as it turned out, he could hear all the time as well as any person, and better than some people, and if I had said Smith, would never have dreamed that I said Frizzle, nor anything like it. He tried to murder the poor lad in that same room, as I believe, although, of course, that was no call why Smith should get *him* murdered after all was forgotten and forgiven, or ought to have been, and a penknife to be stuck into him, or what not, behind a hoarding in such a part of the town, save in your presence, Mr. Policeman, as Poplar. ‘No, Smith,’ says I, ‘let bygones be by-gones——’”

“On a previous occasion, then,” interposed the magis-

trate, "this Gotsuchakoff had assaulted the prisoner at the bar in that apartment? Are you aware of the extent or nature of the provocation upon that occasion?"

"There was a thumb-mark and four fingers, Mr. Policeman, as black as your hat upon the lad's throat, and the bottle of brandy broke—which, however, was emptied first you may be sure, wherever the poor count was—and had to be returned, or threepence paid in money, to the Bunch of Grapes."

"The magistrate wishes to know what the two quarrelled about," suggested an officer at the witness's elbow.

"And I dare say he does, which was also my case, and nothing came of it," returned Mrs. Tipsaway. "The boy was as deep as Garret, and as false to me as he was to Mr. T. ; and you see what has come of it, Smith, and are sorry enough, I dare say, when it is too late, as is always the way in this world. 'He was not agoing to be knocked about by Russians,' that was all he said, 'or he would know the reason why.'"

"Or he would know the reason why," repeated the magistrate. "Now, did he make use of that expression revengefully? Did those words give you the impression of menace—of paying out a person?"

"Oh no," returned Mrs. Tipsaway briskly, becoming suddenly aware of the consequences which might flow from a too general and dramatic rendering of what had actually taken place. "On the contrary, Smith seemed particularly forgiving and affable; he said he didn't mind, not he, for that it would be all the same two or three days hence."

"Ah!" remarked the magistrate, "this was in the same week in which the murder took place; and the prisoner at the bar observed within your hearing, did he, and with

reference to the Russian count, that it would be all the same two or three days hence."

"A hundred years hence, was the exact words he used, Mr. Policeman, though, not being a copy-book, I can't speak letter for letter, to what a person said all in a moment. 'It would be all the same a hundred years hence,' said he ; and I should have thought nothing about it but for this second talk as I overheard between the lad and Mr. de Cresspinny :

"'I can speak your language,' says the boy.

"'The dickens you can !' says the French gentleman in an awful voice.

"'Ay,' says the boy ; 'but there's another as speaks it too, whom you don't know of.'

"'Who?' says De Cresspinny, grinding his teeth most terrible.

"'Why, the Russian,' says the boy, 'who aint no more deaf nor dumb than that 'ere table. He listens to you, bless you, he does, and knows about all your plots and 'spiracies ; he keeps all your handwritings in his pocket-book ; and if he were searched this moment you would find them there.'"

"Would you know that pocket-book again, if you were to see it ?" asked the magistrate.

"Of course I should : it was of Russian leather, as was natural, he being one of 'em, you know ; and I have seen it in his hand again and again.—Ay, that *is* the pocket-book, sure enough, which I can swear to—Well : 'I can't believe it,' says Mr. de Cresspinny. 'Why, he has been a humbugging of us for thirty years, if this be true.'

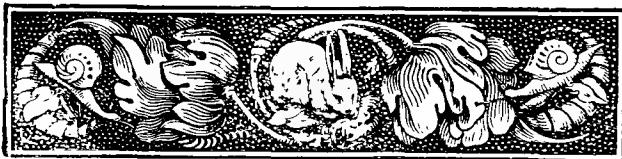
"'But it is true,' says Smith ; 'it is, and you may take your Davy on it.' And then the French gentleman swore most dreadful in his own tongue, which I am thankful to

think I couldn't understand ; and they came out, and I ran into the back parlour just in time, and was no more fit for plaiting, let alone delicate hair work, all that day, than if my fingers had been toes."

" And this is all you know about the prisoner's connection with Mr. de Crespigny and the Russian count ? "

" That is all, Mr. Policeman, leastways except that when my husband read out of the *Dispatch* newspaper that a foreign gent had been murdered at Poplar, answering to the description of old Dum—or Count Gotsuchakoff, as is the Russian name of him—Smith nearly fainted out of his chair ; and being sent out for a cab, he took hisself off with a couple of best tortoiseshell combs, which have not been returned ; and I have never set eyes upon him since until this day."

This was all that Mrs. Tipsaway had to say of the matter, and almost all that anybody else had to say. The bones of the Russian count and the photograph of his dead body could witness nothing, while not one of the foreign gentlemen who had formerly frequented the perruquier's shop was now to be found. To commit the lad for trial upon such evidence, fully corroborated by his own voluntary statement of the affair, seemed out of the question ; but on account of the importance and mystery of the case, he was not released, but remanded until that day-week upon the criminal charge.



CHAPTER XVIII.

GOOD SAMARITANS.

“**T**is not a case that admits of bail being taken,” were the last words that smote upon Dick’s ears as he was led out of court, but it was an unnecessary severity of speech. There was no competition among respectable householders to share the honour of becoming Dick’s security. It seemed, indeed, as if he had cut his moorings for good and all, as far as concerned that class of persons, and that he was drifting out into the great ocean of scoundrel-dom, never to come within sight of port again. Nor was there one friendly pilot to put off from either bank, and take the helm, or even to halloo from the last pier-head, as he swept by, a single warning word.

He had been in his cell about a couple of hours, and had his untasted dinner lying before him, when a policeman entered, with “A lady to see you, young gentleman;” and Dick heard the rustle of a silk garment without daring to lift his eyes. Had Sister Maggie, then, come forth from his dead mother’s room to comfort him? Nay, did she bring a last message of farewell from those clay-cold lips, after having delivered which, she would depart, and he would see her never more? The poor lad shivered in that unseen presence as our First Parents might have done when the rebukeful angel pointed to the

gates of Eden with his flaming sword, and bade them depart for ever.

“I have brought you money, my poor boy,” said a tone sisterly indeed, but which was not his Sister Maggie’s, “which my—that is, which Richard and Mr. Sunstroke owe to you. I thought perhaps, that you might need it here.”

Dick stretched out his hands for her to take them in her own with a mute gratitude, but he could not yet look up even into *her* face—“kept dark” though she might be by Mr. Trimming, out of a due regard to maternal prejudice.

“You are very, very good to me,” said he; “but this is not a place for *you* to be in. Why didn’t Mr. Sunstroke come to see me?”

Dick would have said, why didn’t Mr. Jones?—for that was the name by which he always spoke of the photographer to Lucidora—but that he was anxious to spare her feelings.

At this the girl began to sob hysterically, and hide her face in her turn. “You mustn’t mind them, Dick, if they do not seem to feel as you would, who have been brought up properly and all that; but I would not let them sell your face about the streets, as Sunstroke wished to do, now that you were in trouble and a public character, and I broke the glass, so that they couldn’t take any impressions—you gave it to me, you know, yourself, and therefore I had a right to do as I pleased with it—and now Richard is angry with me, and they don’t know that I am come to you. I am so glad I did though, Dick, for, as I came hurrying into the police-office, there was a letter put into my hand by some person—I don’t know who—and I have seen the magistrate to whom it was directed, and he said it was very important and would do you good.”

The lad shook his head and groaned as though the time was past wherein anything could do that now.

“ You must not take on like that, Dick. What is done can’t be undone ; but we can always do better for the future ; ” although, she added, with a bitter laugh, “ I aint quite the one to preach it. The first thing to be done, is to get you out of this ; and the magistrate, who is a kind man, though he interrupts one so, thinks that this may be managed. There was a copy taken of the letter, and I’ve brought it here, only it isn’t the least like the other to look at, which was all written upon paper as thin as a cobweb, and in such a little, little hand, and all in French.”

Lucidora produced a document from the magistrate’s office in the stiffest possible handwriting, but containing a very free translation from the original. It bore the date of about a fortnight back, but not the name of the place where it was drawn up, nor had it any heading or superscription other than this : *Declaration concerning the Execution of Alexis Gotsuchakoff, Spy and Traitor.*

“ The following statement has been drawn up by the undersigned at the especial request of one of them, Henri de Crespigny, to be laid before the police magistrate or other authority before whom one Richard Smith may at any time be summoned in connection with the fate of the above-named Count Alexis Gotsuchakoff, lawfully done to death on Wednesday last, at midnight and in accordance with an enactment against traitors which he himself had subscribed.

“ It is true that the lad was the discoverer of the treachery of that man, inasmuch as he was the first to inform one of us of the count’s not being a mute, which Gotsuchakoff had successfully pretended to be for more than thirty years ; but he was certainly unaware of the im-

portance of such a disclosure, and far less could he have anticipated the punishment which it justly entailed upon that unhappy man.

“When Richard Smith had informed M. de Crespigny of the count’s having spoken the French tongue in his hearing, as well as of his having certain documents in his possession, which he (the count) professed to have destroyed, affecting the lives and liberties of the undersigned, as well as those of hundreds of innocent persons, whose betrayal he was in that case plotting, M. de Crespigny at once repaired to Herr Singler’s lodging—it being then about seven o’clock in the evening. Having communicated to him the above intelligence, the two went separately out, for the purpose of calling together the principal members of our Society, with the exception of Count Gotsuchakoff, for immediate and important deliberation.

“In a little time, the chiefs of the Society then in London, comprising representatives from every European nation, and numbering five and-twenty persons, assembled at the rooms of M. de Crespigny, as being the most commodious for that purpose, where the circumstances which have been described were laid before them. It was decided that four should be selected out of that body by ballot, to go at once to Count Gotsuchakoff’s, and acquaint themselves certainly with the truth or falsehood of this charge—the most hateful that can be preferred against a fellow-creature, and therefore one the proof of which it is necessary to place beyond all doubt before proceeding to act upon it. The persons thus selected were Henri de Crespigny, Rudolph Singler, Antonio Castigliano, and Suwarrow Blaski—the last being a countryman of the accused person.

“In case of proven guilt, the execution of Alexis Gotsuchakoff was intrusted—a dreadful but necessary and

sacred duty—to the hands of these four persons. The two first mentioned preceded the other two, in order to avoid observation, to the count's lodgings in Poplar, and found him retired to his sleeping-chamber, although it was then scarce eleven o'clock, and it was his general custom to sit up very late at night.

“He observed—talking with his fingers, as he always did—that he was not well, being overtired with the protracted sitting of the Society during that day. There was a haggard and terrified look about him while he stated this, never beheld in him before, and which convinced the spectators that he guessed the nature and reason of their unseasonable visit.

“‘We wish,’ cried M. de Crespigny, speaking aloud, and looking sternly at the wretched man, ‘to examine your pocket-book, with those slips of paper in our handwriting in it, which you have omitted to burn this day.’

“It was terrible to see how pale and terror-stricken the count turned at this, his fingers trembling so that they could scarcely form the denial which he gave by their means, in order to keep up the notion that he could not speak; although, in his agitation, he forgot that by that very denial he was acknowledging that he was at least able to hear.

“At the same moment, Castigliano and Blaski entered.

“‘I have asked this man,’ said De Crespigny, addressing himself to them, ‘who has never understood word of mine (as he has made me believe) for thirty years, to see the slips in my own handwriting and yours, which he carries in his pocket-book, and he replies with his fingers—as though he could not use his tongue as well as his ears—that he has them not.’

“‘I suppose the lad at the perruquier’s told you,’ observed Gotsuchakoff in the French language; which to

everyone there present—notwithstanding what they had been made acquainted with—seemed like some prodigious miracle. ‘If I had not been so mercifully faint-hearted, I should have killed him. It is hard that thirty years of success in such a part as mine should have been concluded by a rascal boy, whom, if ever again I meet——’

“‘Silence, wretched man!’ cried De Crespigny—‘silence, and think of your lies no more. There is no plotting in the grave, no traitor’s work to be done among the dead; and vengeance is for us, and not for you!’

“‘So you came to murder me?’ exclaimed the count, half-rising in his bed, and thereby disclosing that he was fully dressed, and had only made pretence of illness.

“‘The Society has decreed your death,’ returned De Crespigny.

“‘So soon?’ ejaculated the count—‘so soon, and without trial? What good can my death then do to it? I will make it a terror to kings, if you let me live. Have I served its foes for thirty years, counterplotting, revealing, destroying for them, without being trusted, think you, in return? I swear to you that I will henceforth serve it alone.’

“‘It needs no traitors,’ exclaimed Castiglano, snatching the pocket-book, a corner of which he perceived protruding from beneath the pillow. ‘See, here are the slips upon which we wrote this very afternoon, and that he made believe to burn; any one of which would be our death-warrant in the place where he would have sent them. What has the traitor written here, Blaski? It is in your own language.’

“‘It is the entire detail of our plan of to-day,’ returned the Russian. The other three crowded round to look over his shoulder as he translated, and Count Gotsucha-

koff seized the moment to leap from the bed, and make for the door of the sitting-room.

“‘It is locked,’ said De Crespigny quietly, as his companions rushed upon the unhappy wretch, and carried him back into the inner chamber, bound and gagged. ‘I knew that such a traitor would never have the courage to meet his end like a man.’

“At this moment, a step was heard upon the stairs, and the lodging-house keeper knocked at the outer-door, inquiring whether anything would be wanted before she retired for the night.

“‘The count will require nothing more,’ replied Herr Singler; ‘we are all going out in a little, and have persuaded him to accompany us.’

“Then they turned the man with his face towards the wall, while they arranged the manner of his death, and drew lots for him whose hand should perform the deed. Next, they wrapped the count’s cloak around him, and a woollen comforter about his mouth to conceal the gag, and two of them took him between them into the street to an unfrequented spot, close by, which had been agreed upon. When they reached that spot, and found themselves alone, the one upon whom the lot had fallen struck the fatal blow with a sharp poinard, and the body was placed out of sight behind a hoarding of planks.

“The above is copied, word for word, from the minutes of the Society which organised the deed. It desires not to excuse its proceedings in this declaration, or in the eyes of him to whom it is addressed; else it could easily set forth reasons abundantly sufficient for the execution of the traitor in question, as one who had caused to be committed, and for the sake of blood-money, the judicial murder of many hundreds of persons, as well as brought

imprisonment, exile, and ruin upon their helpless wives and children ; and who, moreover, within the very hour of his death, was disclosing, to those who hired him, a certain scheme of that Society of which he was a sworn member, the betrayal of which would have brought scores of honest men to the scaffold, and of noble ladies to shame. The sole purpose, however, of this declaration is to set forth that the lad, Richard Smith, employed at the perruquier Tipsaway's, has had nothing whatever to do with this matter, except so far as has been already stated, and had neither share nor knowledge of the execution of Alexis Gotsuchakoff.

(Signed) "HENRI DE CRESPIGNY.
"RUDOLPH SINGLER.
"ANTONIO CASTIGLIANO.
"SUWARROW BLASKI."

"There, you see, they acknowledge that you had nothing to do with it," cried Lucidora, "and the magistrate believed it too ; of that I am sure. I dare say the Russian deserved it, poor fellow, telling upon people that had trusted him through all these years ; but it was an awful end. What a thing it would have been to have met him in the street between those other two, bound and gagged, and walking to his death among crowds of people that would have rescued him if they had only known !"

"Horrible, most horrible !" cried Dick with a shudder. "and but for me, it would never have happened ; and yet I would expose a wretch like that to his dupes, if it all was to be done again to-morrow."

"Well, I don't know," replied Lucidora doubtfully ; "I think it is ill work to be meddling with those foreign folks. Do you know that the magistrate—who thought

I was your sister at first, I think—said that the whole business was so grave that it would probably have to be laid before the Home Sec——”

“A gentleman to see you,” cried the janitor, suddenly opening the door; at which Mrs. Jones slunk into a corner petrified, under the impression that the august personage to whom she had alluded was at hand, about to pay a visit of ceremony to the accused person, preparatory, perhaps, to his being led forth to immediate execution.

“Why, my poor boy, Richard,” exclaimed the visitor, who was no other than good Mr. Mickleham, “what a position is this I find you in, and what a blow it would have been to pottery in case you had really been concerned in this assassination! You have, however, as I just learn, only to appear before the magistrate, and go through a legal form of release, and then you will come home with me to Kensington. My solicitor assures me that there was scarcely any ground at all for your remand. There, there, Richard, don’t cry, my lad—don’t disturb yourself, although of course it *was* hard to hear them patterning—that is what they call it, I believe—pattering the broad-sheets about your apprehension and personal appearance immediately opposite your uncle’s establishment. Your names being identical is, without doubt, a great misfortune; and it would have certainly saved us much annoyance if you had been related to him upon your mother’s side instead of your father’s.”

At these words the flush of glad surprise which had risen into the boy’s cheeks at the news of his speedy enfranchisement, faded off at once, and he sunk down into his chair again, with “My mother—my poor mother; there is no pardon for my having murdered *her*!”

“Richard Arbour,” cried the old gentleman kindly,

“I am glad to see this sorrow for your late undutiful conduct, but I do not wish to see you despair: be comforted, for your poor mother’s death does not lie at your door. She had been ailing for many months, and even years, and her end was expected even before it came. Doubtless, it would have pleased her to have seen your face by her bedside, but it could not have saved her. I may tell you, even, that your Sister Margaret was of opinion that it would have distressed her mother more to see the disagreements between yourself and certain members of your family, than to know, by your letters, that you were at least cheerful-hearted and not in want. I doubt whether I am right in saying so much, since it may only encourage you in your roving and indeed vagabond——” But by this time Dick was upon his knees mumbling the old gentleman’s hand as though it were gingerbread, and Mr. Mickleham could not somehow conclude his valuable remarks; his nose, if one might judge from a very ostentatious use of his pocket-handkerchief, putting in a prior claim to his attention. There was also a sobbing noise, as of a cistern-pipe in difficulties, from an obscure corner of the cell, which caused Mr. Mickleham to inquire into its nature with the greatest apparent interest.

“It is a very good friend of mine, Sir,” replied Dick softly—“the only one, to say truth, who would have been likely to come and see me here, except yourself. Lucidora——”

“Lucidora!” exclaimed the old gentleman suspiciously —“what a very singular name!”

The young lady thus alluded to came quickly forward, wiping her eyes, and took Dick’s hand, which he extended to her very gratefully. “I am glad, Master Richard Arbour, that you are going amongst your friends

again, and to live with respectable people. This gentleman, I see, considers me very far from that, and company fit for neither him nor you."

"No, no," returned Mr. Mickleham nervously ; "really I never meant—dear me, no—doubtless a most respectable young person—but Lucidora—such a very singular name—"

"Sir, you are quite right," replied the girl, not without some dignity. "I should, however, not have been here at all, if I had thought this poor lad would have had any help from my betters. My own experience has been, that when folks get into trouble, their respectable friends are not very active in getting them out of it." With which remark, the young lady left the room, and with such a sweeping courtesy to Mr. Mickleham, that the wind of it seemed to take away the old gentleman's breath for several seconds.

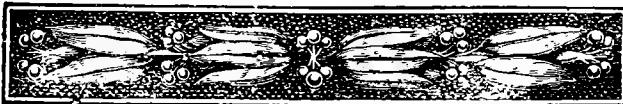
"She has been exceedingly good and kind to me," observed Dick apologetically.

"Indeed !" responded the other drily, and drawing on his gloves. "I trust, however, that in future it will not be necessary for you to cultivate similar friendships. I shall mention nothing of the circumstance myself, and I would recommend the like silence to you, Richard. You are quite ready to see his worship, I suppose, after which you will find a hearty welcome at our house, I do assure you. My daughter Lucy is very sensible of the kindness you once displayed to her at Miss Backboard's. She could not write to me of your position on account of that woman's habit of reading other people's letters, or I would have got you away from the barber's long ago. It is just as well that you have not touched that dinner, Dick, for it would have been throwing away anything like an appetite to have eaten it ; and, gracious goodness,

what a miserable taste in crockery! The commonest delf, and the very ugliest pattern that can be got in Staffordshire!"

And with an expression of regret that the police should neglect so powerful a means for the reformation of criminals as well-selected earthenware, Mr. Mickleham led the way to the magistrate.





CHAPTER XIX.

THE EXCOMMUNICATION.

WHEN Mrs. Benjamin Arbour had been buried, in such a manner as did no discredit to that respectable firm to which she had the honour of being allied by marriage, there was still another solemnity to be held in Golden Square upon that same afternoon. The actors in it were the entire Arbour family—Adolphus, Maria, Johnnie, Margaret, and Uncle Ingram, with Dick added—as the race-cards say of any extraneous matter. He had come that morning from Mr. Mickleham's house at Kensington, by express invitation, to attend his mother's funeral, but neither his uncle nor his other relatives had so much as taken his hand in theirs, with the exception of Sister Maggie. She had never set eyes on him since that happy day on the river long ago; new experiences of life had altered his looks and made a man of him in the meantime, but her heart seemed to know no change, but beat responsive as of old to his in a long embrace of love.

“She bade me give you this, and this,” she whispered, kissing him tenderly; “whatever is said of poor mamma to-day, Richard, and whoever says it, remember, if it be a word of rebuke for *you*, that it is not true.” Maggie knew what pangs of self-reproach were rankling in the boy, for Lucy Mickleham had written to her every day about him, while her father had even paid a visit to

Golden Square in person in the vain hope of moving Mr. Arbour's heart towards the prodigal.

Luncheon was laid out upon the sideboard of the dining-room when the gentlemen came home, and its place upon the huge mahogany table was occupied by the family Bible. Uncle Ingram having assembled the family and closed the door, seated himself opposite to the volume, as though it were a ledger, and selecting a broad-nibbed pen from the standish, filled it carefully with ink.

“Richard Arbour,” said he, “it is not my purpose to embitter the feeling which I am told you are beginning —tardily enough—to entertain regarding the wicked undutifulness of your past life, by any remarks of mine. When I was in the position of your natural protector, and was paying for your support and education, I sometimes thought it my duty to remonstrate with you upon your misbehaviour; but as, from this date, I give up all charge concerning you, and wash my hands of you and your future actions altogether, I spare you further censure. I say nothing of the manner in which you have resolutely opposed yourself to every plan for your own prosperity and well-doing. I say nothing of the wrong you have done to those whose greatest weakness has been a blind attachment to an unworthy object—yourself; nor of the serious pecuniary expense that I have been put to for your maintenance up to this time. Your share of your mother's property, who would probably but for you have been living now——”

“Uncle, uncle!” appealed Margaret passionately.

“Well, then, to carry out my intention strictly, and not to hint at what has been done or undone, your fortune of £600, Sir, lies in that pocket-book, and you may take it away with you when you leave this house.”

"Keep it, Sir, and pay yourself out of it!" replied Richard doggedly; "I will never accept one farthing of it from such a hand."

"It will be paid into my banker's to your name, then," returned the merchant coolly, "to be spent when you please and how you please, which, if we may judge from the company you have been recently keeping, will be disreputably enough; but mind, when that is gone, you never have one guinea more from me; no, not one shilling to rub against another——"

"I do not want to rub one of your shillings against another," interrupted Dick, maddened by the contemptuous malice that sat upon the countenances of his eldest brother and sister as much as by his uncle's cruel scorn. "What have I done?" cried he, turning so sharply round upon Adolphus that that gentleman drew in his legs with great rapidity—which before were luxuriating at utmost length, as the legs of one who is seeing justice done upon the wicked at no personal risk—and put himself into a posture of self-defence; "what have I done that I should be treated thus vilely by you all? I have stood it often for the sake of her who is gone, and whose loss not one of you, save Maggie yonder, has a single tear for: but I am not going to stand it now."

"He is about to butcher his eldest brother," observed Maria, with acrimonious distinctness; "he is nothing less than a second Cain."

"Ay, and he is Able, too," returned Dick with epigrammatic ferocity, and excited, as usual, to frenzy by that sisterly voice.

"Silence, Maria; do not touch him, Adolphus," exclaimed Mr. Arbour sternly; "you have done with him from henceforth as well as myself. You ask what you

have done, Sir, do you, to deserve this treatment? I will tell you, then. You have killed your mother——”

“That is a lie,” replied Dick furiously; “and there is none who knows it better than yourself.”

The corners of Mr. Ingram Arbour’s mouth gave a twitch at this, the resultant of two forces—anger at his nephew’s insult, and consciousness of having been really somewhat hard upon the deceased lady. “You have killed your mother,” he continued, “or at least have shortened her life by your undutiful ways; you have associated with conspirators, and—and—haircutters; you have voluntarily abandoned, I say, that station of life into which, as your catechism very properly remarks, it has pleased Heaven to call you, and connected yourself with a set of——” Here Mr. Ingram Arbour, whose indignation had caused him to rashly leave the safe current of speech prepared beforehand, for the eddies of extemporaneous discourse, grounded heavily upon a sand-bar.

“A set of bloodthirsty assassins!” suggested Sister Maria.

“A set of bloodthirsty and continental assassins,” repeated Uncle Ingram, making the remark his own by extension of epithet.

“That is not true, Sir,” returned the hardy Dick, as he thought of kind Mr. de Crespigny.

“You have been in the hands of the police, and narrowly escaped from the imputation of murder; our name has been hawked about the streets, through you, in connection with a capital crime; you are a disgrace to the family, Sir, and you belong to it from this moment no longer.”

And with that Uncle Ingram drew the broad nibbed pen through the name of Richard Arbour, which was written on the fly-leaf of the book before him, whose

mission was to preach forgiveness of all injuries. That name had been inscribed there, with faltering fingers, by the poor lad's father, when he lay a-dying, some sixteen years ago, whose own name also stood above it, written in the heyday of his life, when he and his Leety were but newly married.

Richard did not ask himself whether the deed was just, or if so, whether his uncle had the right to execute it ; he only felt as though some terrible and inexorable excommunication had been pronounced against him, which he had not the power to despise or set at nought. The occurrences of his short life which had led to such a scene, and especially those tremendous ones that had thronged the last few days of it, whirled through his brain so fast, that he could scarcely hear what was passing. He knew that Maggie was interceding for him, and that Mr. Arbour was replying to her obdurately, and that was all.

“It is of no use, uncle,” at last he heard her say ; “for flesh and blood is stronger than pen and ink.”

“We will see,” he answered, more bitterly than he was accustomed to speak to his favourite niece ; “we will put that to the test at once. You, Adolphus—I begin with you, my eldest nephew and my heir, although all who are here present, save one, will have no reason when I die to complain that I have left them unprovided for. Are you prepared to forget your relationship to this fellow here ; to neither speak nor write to him ; to treat him as though he had met with that fate which the law has been within a little of awarding him ? Will you swear upon this sacred book, I say, to abjure him as one of the family, and so to express your sanction of the act of justice which has just now been done by me ?”

The look which, in the capacity of Head of the Family

Adolphus assumed upon this solemn adjuration, was a sight to see ; he appeared to have borrowed half of it from the rôle of Brutus in the act of sacrificing his sons for the commonwealth, while the other half (which was his own), bore a strong resemblance to that more modern hero of the drama—Tartuffe.

“ It is a very painful duty, Uncle Ingram, but it *is* my duty, and being so, I should be wrong to shrink from it. Brother Richard,” continued he, “ as after I have taken this oath, our intercourse will cease, I ask of you if you have any final observation to make before I do so.”

This hypocritical address acted upon Dick’s prostrate condition like a cordial dram ; he felt the embers of indignation kindle once more within him, and had a difficulty in suppressing an impudent twinkle of his downcast eyes, as he replied.

“ I have one thing to say, Adolphus, but it should not be said here.”

“ I have no secrets with such as you,” responded the other, loftily ; “ whatever you have to speak must be spoken here, and in my uncle’s presence. If I can carry out any last wish of yours, Sir, consistent with duty, with honesty, and with proper feeling, I shall be happy to do so.” The mantle, or toga, of Brutus here seemed to forsake the shoulders of Mr. Adolphus Arbour, and his air resembled greatly that of Mr. Calcraft, the hangman, when demanding of a gentleman about to be artistically dealt with, whether there is anything, which, after the ceremony, he can have the pleasure of doing for him.

“ There is one thing, Brother Adolphus,” returned Dick, in a confidential whisper which could be heard all over the room—“ there is one thing consistent with the

virtues you have mentioned, that I do think you ought to do: you should keep your word with your uncle's maid, poor Betsy, and marry her at your very earliest convenience."

"I swear!" exclaimed Adolphus, viciously, missing in his blind fury the volume which he would have struck with his clenched fist, and overturning the ink-bottle.

"That's right," remarked Dick, drily; "I'm glad you've sworn it; and now I do hope you'll get the bans published as soon as possible."

"Maria!" cried Mr. Ingram Arbour, pallid with rage at this introduction of the comic element into a scene which was intended to have been profoundly grave, "you have heard what I have said to your elder brother; are you likewise prepared to give up this ribald boy, and to forget that he ever bore our family name to its disgrace?"

"I am," returned that young lady, regarding the outcast biliously; "and it would have been better, in my judgment, if this thing had been done before."

"Swear away," observed Dick, with cheerfulness. "I can only regret, Maria, that I can get nobody to promise to marry *you*."

Maria's yellow countenance was shot with scarlet, like some inexpensive silk, as she abandoned the lad as her brother for ever and ever, but she did not venture upon expressing her indignation in words again.

"And you, John, are you, too, prepared to let all connection cease between this fellow and yourself?"

Johnny Arbour had no absolute malignity in his nature, and would not willingly have hurt a fly, unless the act had been of manifest benefit to him—in which case, however, he would have sacrificed the entire human

family without the least internal struggle. He did not “see the good” of a domestic condemnation such as the present, wherein, moreover, as far as words went, the proposed victim was clearly getting the best of it; and he walked up to the table with much such misgivings as some Tory voter who approaches the polling-booth secure indeed of the final triumph of his candidate, but also aware that there are rotten eggs and cabbage stalks to be got from the unrepresented democracy who wait outside the threshold.

“Brother John,” cried Dick, arresting him in the act of ostracism, “as you have the Bible there, will you swear upon it that it was not yourself who cut Bill Dempsey’s eye out with a snow-ball, years ago, and laid the blame on me?”

“I swear,” exclaimed Johnny hastily, turning pale as death, and tottering to his seat, as though he had just been struck off the roll of practising attorneys.

“You may here perceive,” remarked Dick, with the air of a showman exhibiting a wax-work ruffian in some “Room of Horrors”—“you may here perceive how a young man looks, from head to foot, who has just committed a perjury.”

“My dear Margaret,” observed Mr. Ingram Arbour, “it is now your turn to do *your* duty. You have learned from his own mouth within the last few minutes—if you entertained any doubt of it before—what sort of character this young man really is; how insolent, how malignant, how wanting in all self-respect as well as in respect to others. You will not, I trust, be backward to ratify that conclusion to which myself and all other members of the family have come to—that it is necessary that this fellow be cut off from it, and take his own evil way alone.”

“ My dear uncle,” returned Margaret quietly, “ I am sorry that I cannot obey you in this matter ; I am not unmindful, believe me, of the benefits which you have so long conferred upon one and all of us, but I cannot, even to please *you*, perform an act which I believe to be both unjust and uncalled for.”

“ And yet you were by your mother’s bedside when she died,” returned the merchant sternly.

“ It is because I was with her then and at all times, and know the wishes of her loving soul so well, that I would not now desert this boy of hers, although his weaknesses were ingrained vices (which they are not), and his follies crimes.”

“ I do not wish to be angry with you, Margaret,” returned the old man firmly ; “ but I must be obeyed by you as well as by others. Whoever of you from this day forth holds intercourse with that boy yonder, whether by speech or letter, will derive no benefit from what I have to leave behind ; their name, so help me Heaven, shall never so much as be written in my will.”

“ My own dear Sister Maggie,” cried Dick suddenly, “ do not cross your uncle in this matter for the sake of me, I pray. I should—indeed I should—be far more wretched in the thought that I had been the cause of your being left unprovided for, of any wrong being done to you, than even in the knowledge that we were never more to meet in this world. This man cannot prevent my loving you ; he can hinder our *hands* from clasping, but that is all.”

Maggie heard him with a proud smile of love and triumph, but when he ended, only shook her golden hair for answer to him.

“ And think you, Uncle Ingram,” exclaimed she, “ that I would barter such a love as that—one single kiss, one

hand-clasp, one kind word—for the being set down in a dead man's will?"

So scornfully the girl's eyes flashed upon him that the old man did not care to meet them with his own, but kept his face averted, and with his fingers tore the pen that had crossed Richard's name out into fragments.

"I did not think so, Margaret," answered he, in suppressed tones, and with some effort; "and I meant to use no threat, or at least not only threats. Have I earned nothing at your hands, niece? Have I not ever been kind and true to you? Have I ever refused a request in reason? Have I not shown my love in a thousand ways?"

"You have, uncle: and far oftener than I have deserved. If some of that kindness, some of that consideration, some of that love, had been shown to that poor boy yonder—"

"Silence, girl!" cried Mr. Arbour, fiercely; "do not dictate to me what I should have done, or what I should have left undone. I have humbled myself too much already to you, and now, as I perceive, to little purpose. I was but recapitulating what I have felt towards you, in order to let you know, that while remembering it—that in despite of it—I was prepared to punish your disobedience as it deserved. We have had talk enough, and I waste my words no longer about this matter. As sure as I stand here, a living man, if you abjure not the companionship of that boy, now and for ever, you will find yourself portionless, penniless, or with only that miserable pittance between yourself and beggary as lies here now, between him and the jail which will receive him when it is spent.—That is well, Margaret," continued the old man in a triumphant tone, as the girl rose, while he

spoke, and with pallid lips laid her hand upon the still open Bible ; “ that is well, child, and you will swear while there is yet time, I know.”

“ I swear,” exclaimed Margaret firmly, “ in the presence, for all that I can tell, of the sainted soul of that lad’s mother, who was buried this day, that I will never desert him, or forget that he is her son and my own brother, from this day forth until the day I die.”





CHAPTER XX.

AMONG FRIENDS.

DHE domestic shell having thus exploded without altogether confining itself in the direction intended by the astonished bombardier, there was Chaos enough in that respectable Golden Square dining-room without the discordant element of Dick's presence. He wisely concluded that he would only be making matters worse by remaining, and so he unceremoniously left the room at once. Mrs. Trimming, suspiciously near the door, was in the hall to receive him, to fold him in her substantial arms, to drop upon his exiled brow her sympathetic tears.

“It's a sin and shame, Master Dick ; but it's along of that young Mr. Adolphus who misleads your uncle ; it done my heart good to see you a sticking up to him. My Richard—Mr. Jones, I mean—always told me as how it would come to that. ‘Some day or another,’ says he—but I am glad you did not touch him, for you should never lay hand upon your own flesh and blood—‘it will be Dick *versus* Dolly with a vengeance.’ Here's a note for you from him, which I was to be very particular to put into your own hand. God bless you, my dear boy ; and if ever a five-pound note, or, for the matter of that, a ten——Heaven preserve us, here's my master !”

The young outlaw seized the handle of the front door,

and hastened with considerable asperity to place that visible barrier between himself and his sometime relative ; but the next moment his hat, weighty with its trappings of woe, brought to mind the sorrow which had only been in abeyance during the preceding scene, and he took his homeward way, weeping and despondent—not because he had been disinherited, but because he had been bereaved and orphaned.

The little villa at Kensington, to which he was now returning, had been for the last few days a home indeed to him. Mr. Mickleham had never alluded to any of the circumstances which had brought him there, save when he himself had evinced a wish to speak of them, but had treated him with the courtesy of a host as well as the interest of a father. Lucy was never tired of talking with him of his Sister Maggie, and now and then, when she saw he was more than commonly depressed, of his dead mother ; for she also had known what that loss is, and how far better it is to speak of such a grief than to shut it up in the lonely heart which is its prey. Now and then, too, in gayer moments, she would slyly advert to the deterioration of her hair, which, she persisted, had never recovered the injury it had received at the hands of a certain incompetent person.

“It was only one little, little curl,” remonstrated Dick, imagining at first that she had discovered the loss of her missing ringlet. “I stole it, I confess, but who would not have been a thief and picked a lock under such temptation ?”

“You don’t mean to say that you have stolen a lock of my hair, you wicked, wicked boy !” cried the girl, blushing ; but it is probable that she would not have sent him across the seas for that offence, if it had lain in her power, nor, indeed, to any great distance from

Kensington. She was always persuading him to go back to Darkendim Street, and be reconciled to his uncle—incited thereto by her papa—and built up considerable hopes of his turning out a sort of Industrious Apprentice, to be eventually a lord mayor of London, after all. Dick was born to be misunderstood by his friends as well as to be condemned by his enemies.

There was another person in the little Kensington household, too, who helped to make it a paradise for the young rogue, deserving though he was of altogether different quarters. Mr. Mickleham had a son William, about ten years older than Dick, and after that lad's own heart. Not that Mr. William was irreclaimable, erratic, vagabondish, or any one of those many adjectives which yoke so harmoniously with the word Scapegrace, but he had a tenderness for those that were. All literary men—I speak it to their honour—with the exception of a few of the heavier sort (the sumpter mules of the profession, who carry all the classical quotations for us), have an eye of pity and an open hand for the poor *mauvais sujets* to whom Society presents quite another portion of her person, or even her clenched fist (for in spite of her fine-lady airs and assumptions of indifference, she can show herself a considerable virago where she thinks it safe to do so) and Mr. William Mickleham was to some extent “a literary man :” not openly and avowedly so, indeed—for such a confession would have shocked his father into an apoplexy—but he mitigated the rigours of a government clerkship by an occasional flirtation with the muse, and regarded her clandestine offspring with that affection, the depth of which no man, who has not similarly sinned himself, can never plumb. He was not a poet in any high sense of the term, of course ; Heaven is not so superfluous as to permit people

in the enjoyment of government situations to be also great geniuses ; but he had a deeper knowledge of human nature than is possessed by most persons. In particular, he had an insight of appreciation denied to many a one of keener intellect. Where a mere man of the world beheld a mental deformity, William Mickleham detected the latent cause of its outgrowth, and found it not always a weakness. Other men in his office could “spot” their companions with equal accuracy—an expressive metaphor, though borrowed, I believe, from the billiard-table—but *he* knew what they were fit for, not only what they couldn’t do : he understood more than that the round hole was unsuited to them, and could sometimes indicate the polygon which should be dug for their especial accommodation. It was abundantly clear to him that the hole in Darkendim Street, wherein his father had found himself so comfortable for so many years, was of far too exact proportions ever to suit that very irregular figure, Master Richard Arbour.

“If you were my son, Dick,” remarked Mr. Mickleham, junior, with relation to this matter, on the third night of the lad’s acquaintance with him—by which time he had gained his confidence as easily as ever Jesuit mastered that of woman—“if you were my son, I tell you honestly, you should go to sea to-morrow.”

“Say the day after,” replied Dick, flippantly ; “tomorrow’s a Friday ;” for the subject of his future prospects had got by this time to be rather an exacerbating one to the young gentleman.

“It’s wonderful how constant the symptoms of your disease are in every case,” remarked the philosopher musingly, puffing at a long churchwarden pipe, with its bowl half-way up the chimney, in order that the smell of tobacco might not pervade the house ; “it’s impossible to

touch upon the question of the future fortunes of any of you Scapegraces, without getting an impudent reply for one's pains."

"I did not mean to be impudent," returned Dick, penitently.

"Of course not, my dear Sir," answered the other; "I know you didn't. You are impudent by natural constitution. You can no more prevent it, than you can prevent your hair curling, or your nose turning up. I suppose, too, you have been a good deal bullied already about what is to become of you?"

"Ah, I just have," replied Dick, with a deep-drawn sigh. "I remember that Maria used to tell me that I would never get salt to my porridge, to encourage me to set about it, I suppose, when I was so young that I did not know what porridge meant: then Adolphus was always impressing upon me that if I lived to be a hundred, I should never make anything of business, and at the same time pitching into me for *not* making something of it; while, as for Uncle Ingram—oh lor, the things I have had said to me about what I was to be, and what I was not to be, they make me perspire to think of them."

"I know," returned the philosopher, nodding; "and there was 'an old friend of your father's,' or two, wasn't there, who remembered you when you were 'so high,' and prophesied that you would never grow up to be such a man as he? They asked you what you were going to be, didn't they, as though you were a chrysalis about to astonish them by some extraordinary transformation; and when you said you didn't know, remarked it was high time you did; and when you did know, and told them, they objected to it? The friends of one's father *are* oppressive. There ought to be a funeral pyre upon which the whole of his contemporaries should be sacrificed, on

his demise, without distinction of sex or age ; indeed, I think the women are the worst."

"They *are*," returned the young gentleman, not without a shudder of reminiscence—"they are, and no mistake."

"And why won't you be a sailor, Dick, eh? What, you are blushing! You must certainly have some reason of which you ought by no means to be ashamed. The Scapegrace never blushes, so far as I have observed, unless when in the act of being influenced by some good motive."

The lad blushed more than ever, as he replied, that his mother had once obtained a promise from him—he did not know with what intention, but it was upon the Sunday before he came up to London for the first time—that he would never, under any circumstances, go to sea.

The philosopher patted the young man's head approvingly. "A dead mother's wish is the best of reasons, lad," observed he. "You must, however, set your hand to something or other ; since you are not in that position of life wherein people enjoy the reputation of being able to do anything you choose without doing it ; and besides, there is the vulgar necessity of getting food. Ah, Dick, Dick, what a shiver that was! Was the remark I made too coarse a one then? Did it hint, ever so remotely, that you had not a shilling of your own, and were living at another man's cost? How strange it is that Providence should have given so much of the Sensitive Plant to natures that have far more need of the Prickly Cactus! Is there, then, no more active line of life adapted for you than that of sitting to a photographer? The professions are out of your reach ; the trades disgust you ; what think you, then, of the pen? Can you write, my Richard?"

“Oh, yes,” replied Dick, briskly; “I can write a very tolerable hand, and even do flourishes with a steel pen—swans, and all that—but I can’t say much for my spelling.”

“I was referring to authorship,” returned Mr. William Mickleham, involuntarily setting back his hair from his classical forehead. “There is little or no demand for poetry of a high order in the present day, but prose, I understand, gets its value, or at least its price. I should think you might try your hand with some prospect of success at the ephem—that is to say the Sparkling Style, which is now so universally popular. They say, it is true, that a good many of the descriptive pieces are turned off by machinery with the same pattern woven in, but they can scarcely have dispensed altogether with brain-work, either. I think rather that that school of writers must have discovered some ingenious adaptation of natural means whereby they produce their extraordinary results. I am not sure but that before describing any plan or object, they invert themselves, and in that position imbibe some effervescent mixture. *You* can stand on your head, my boy, I’m sure. Well, when you next have a leisure twenty minutes, do it; then take one of my Seidlitz-powders yonder, and express your ideas in writing of the tool-house at the end of the back-garden. It will not be very accurate, but it will be lively, and just like enough for many persons to discern what is intended, whereby their self-complacency will be aroused and flattered—which, for all I know, is the object of the sparkling writer, and explains his popularity. What! you don’t think you could overcome the physical difficulties? Why, there are authors of twenty years’ standing—standing on their heads, I mean—who (apparently) suffer from it not the slightest inconve-

nience. At your age, such an admission is serious indeed. You must be bilious, Dick. In that case, the Bilious School will be just the thing for you. Its disciples are moody, witheringly sarcastic, and suspicious to an excessive degree. According to these, the most frightful tragedies are in the course of being enacted in every family, quite unknown to the Detective Police. We all wish each other dead, or, at the best, don't care about the matter either way. One's wife is in love with her music-master, and over the piano the pair interchange the most dangerous sentiments in Italian, a language we know nothing about; the money which our dead father had especially laid aside for our instruction in that tongue having been dissipated by his widow in the travelling expenses of her second honeymoon. There is also the Mutual Improvement School—all serious condescension and personal advice, with intimate relations established with the reader whether he will or no—which I will not insult you by recommending to your notice."

Thus, half in banter, half in earnest, did Mr. William Mickleham suggest this and that line of life to the impracticable youth, without any very great faith in his own recommendations. He concluded, rightly, that this was a case where that oyster the world must be opened after the operator's own manner, and with what instrument he would, and for the present, Mr. William Mickleham, like his father and sister, had fallen back upon vague anticipations of good resulting to the lad from the interview he needs must have with his uncle at the funeral of Mrs. Arbour. He was therefore disappointed scarcely less than they when he learned how that interview had terminated. The £600, which was forwarded to Dick by Mr. Ingram Arbour on the following day, he could not be persuaded to make use of, and it was suffered to lie in his

name at his uncle's bankers, where the old gentleman had placed it.

There came, too, an affectionate letter from Maggie, assuring him of her well-being, and representing herself on the same footing with her uncle as before, except that he would not permit Richard's name to be mentioned. "You may stay with me, Niece Margaret, so long as I live, as usual," he had said, "but when I die, you will find that my oath of disinheritance has been kept to the letter." The girl, however, did not write that latter part of his determination to her brother. She was not only one who was careful for others rather than for herself, but of that still rarer sort—and rarest in the female sex perhaps—who are not solicitous to be known as sufferers even by the being in whose cause they have sacrificed themselves. All she stipulated for, was that whatever course Dick decided upon, he would let her know it; and so concluded with her prayerful wishes for his good. There was a postscript, however—for Maggie was woman as well as angel—which alarmed the lad not a little. "I do not come to you as I long to do, since it would only enrage my uncle; you, I am sure, would be the very last person to desire to expose others to his wrath, whose only crime is their tenderness for you."

Mr. Mickleham had been in unusually low spirits that afternoon, so that Dick did not like to speak of any annoying subject in his presence; but as soon as that gentleman was enjoying his customary nap after dinner, and he found himself alone with Mr. William, he determined to make a confidant of that gentleman, of whose sagacity he had formed a high opinion, and get that same uncomfortable postscript of Sister Maggie's explained.

"Well," observed his mentor, when he had perused the letter, "I have never had the pleasure of seeing Miss

Margaret Arbour, and rather mistrust one young lady's ecstasies about the virtues of another ; but I now believe that all the good I have heard of her from my sister falls short of her real merits."

"She is the very greatest brick," observed Dick, enthusiastically, and with his cheeks glowing as they always did when his theme was Maggie's virtues ; "she never mentions herself, you see, nor hints at the loss to which she has subjected herself on my account. She even tries —God bless her—to make it appear that her uncle has forgiven her, though I know the old——"

"Never mind," interpolated the philosopher, "you may omit the adjectives."

"Well, I know him a precious deal too well to think that possible," continued Dick : "it is for that very reason that I am so puzzled about this postscript, Mr. William. She is not afraid on her own account, of course ; who, then, are these others whom she warns me not to expose to my uncle's anger ?"

"Perhaps Mr. Ingram Arbour is about to impeach the magistrate, who directed the inspector, who ordered the peeler, who called a cab, and thereby effected your discharge from custody. These vindictive uncles will run through the whole *House that Jack Built* in revenge upon every portion of it that has chanced to stand between them and their victim. I have known it to occur myself a hundred times—upon the stage. It is, without doubt, the magistrate of Poplar who is going to catch it."

"You are sure, Sir," inquired the boy appealingly, "that nothing within your own knowledge has taken place between—— Yes, I see there has—— Oh, Mr. William, pray do not deceive me. Has your dear father, my kind friend, suffered any annoyance from my uncle upon my account ?"

“ Well, Dick, the fact is, I think there has been a sort of a row in Darkendim Street to-day. Your brother, I fancy, indulged in some strongish language about harbouring ruffians in defiance of the express wishes of the head of the firm ; and, you see, my father is a commercial man — in short, he’s been a good deal more cut up about it than *I* should have been ; but he would be angry enough, mind you, if he thought that I had whispered it to you. I dare say Mr. Adolphus told your sister what pleasant things he was about to say, as junior partner—for he has been taken into the firm, I hear—to the managing clerk ; and she means to put you on your guard lest you should unwittingly hurt us. But, bless your heart, we are not so easily hurt, Dick ; and you shall not be turned out of our house to please Twangfo himself, the offspring of the sun and moon, and first-cousin to the planetary system, and far less for any pigheaded young china-merchant, such as Mr. Adolphus Arbour.”

Dick could not trust himself to speak, but gratefully wringing the philosopher’s hand, rushed up into his own chamber, and locked the door. His conscience reproached him more bitterly than it had ever done, save when his mother lay a-dying—in that he had given no thought to the possibility of what he had just been told, but had been so ready to say all was well, so long as he was enjoying present ease. He determined that that day should be the last on which he would run the chance of bringing down the lightning of his uncle’s wrath upon any human being, even though he should have to beg his bread through the world. He would not even risk a call upon good Mrs. Trimming for the loan she had offered. But what, by-the-bye, was that letter which she had given him from her son, and which had lain unopened until now in the coat-pocket whither his haste had thrust it on

leaving his uncle's house? He took it out with some vague hope of help, and as he read it, his clouded face began to brighten, and his eyes to dance as the eyes of the poor man will at the sight of a five-pound note, so long as the Bank of England standeth. There was good news besides the note, too, upon that rather dingy piece of paper, and in that other than fashionable female hand.

“Bless her kind heart,” murmured Dick, kissing the soiled and vulgar sheet of paper, which was not from Mr. Jones at all, except the superscription: and then, as though the action had reminded the young dog of who was in the back-garden, he ran down towards that arbour which Mr. William Mickleham—with that offensive depreciation of things pertaining to himself which is the affectation of other philosophers—would persist in calling a tool-house. A tool-house! Say rather a bower of roses by Bedermer's stream; or the pleasure-house in Xanadu—although it was Kensington—where Alph the sacred river ran, through caverns measureless to man; for did not Lucy Mickleham take her Berlin-work there upon summer evenings, and the pure stream of Dick's first love flow round it fathomless?





CHAPTER XXI.

OUT OF TOWN.

AT seventeen, and with a five-pound note in one's pocket, who is there that needs "to call the Lord Mayor his uncle?" —an expression, ladies, borrowed from the classics of the lower classes, and signifying, generally, the advantages of any high social connection. With elastic youth upon our side, and so much money as puts the immediate future out of base consideration, whom, indeed, need we envy? Not the hoary duke, whose span of existence even our five pounds discreetly expended may see the end of, and whose manner of life—if we may believe the popular novelist—has not been such as to afford him entire serenity in its contemplation. Nay, scarcely any old gentleman, we may say, in any however eminent social position, but would be glad to change places with us, and barter all his honours and riches for the privilege granted to Hezekiah of old. Remember *that*, oh unfriended weary young tramp, plodding with scanty wallet upon Life's crowded highway, and may it be a comfort to your murmuring spirit. The third of those who recline in the splendid chariots whose wheels cover you with dust, are by no means to be envied; nay, not even he in the bishop's coach yonder, who has worn his purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, since that

vicarious hour when he married the dangerous girl betrothed to his patron's heir, and left his own sorrowing Katie to wear the willow.

It is possible that poverty-stricken Youth does comfort itself in this fashion, and it is certainly observable that it does not promote or lead revolutions (as one might well expect it to do) in the same proportion as unprosperous Middleage—that period which despises both the hopes of the Young and the regrets of the Old, and estimates to an extreme degree mere loaves and fishes.

It was probably most excellent natural spirits, however, rather than the above reflections, which made Richard Arbour whistle and sing so blithely as he trod the leafy lanes of Devonshire, on the third day from that on which we parted from him at Kensington. He had during that interview in the arbour prepared Miss Lucy's mind for his immediate departure, setting forth the positive necessity of it so vividly, as to silence all her eloquent love-battery except a sigh or two. He did not confide to her the precise nature of the employment he had in view, nor was her trustful nature solicitous to discover what he whom she loved would fain conceal; nor did he reveal it more particularly to her brother, or to Maggie, with both of whom he communicated by letter, after he had left London. By letter, too, he had expressed his profound gratitude to Mr. Mickleham, and the hopes which he entertained of getting an honest livelihood, and of not shaming his generous protector by any future conduct; and by letter he had informed Lucidora that her advice in case of the worst had been followed, and that he accepted her five pounds with the most heartfelt thanks, as a loan which he trusted would be but temporary.

Having thus performed his literary duties—which were always somewhat irksome to him—and set himself right with all his friends—which was a novel as well as satisfactory position to find himself in—Dick had travelled along merrily by coach and railway to within a little of the town of Salterleigh in North Devon, which he was now approaching on foot. The noontide light fell green and golden through the shadowing branches that almost met above his head, and lit up the red sand-stone banks that walled him in on either side. Walking amid a rainbow of colours that seemed rather to belong to the air than earth, and conscious of the unseen summer influences in his heart and brain, it was no wonder that he thought of Darkendim Street, and its smell of mouldy straw, with a sort of pleasant scorn. There is no man so closely wedded to Town, but that on some days in every year he acknowledges to himself that his marriage was one of convenience, and that the Country is his true and natural consort, after all. To the Young especially, just emancipated from the din and toil of a city life, a day among green fields is the Revival Epoch of the earliest and freshest aspirations, when Nature once more makes us that offer of communion—faint though it be grown with much rejection—which she pressed upon us when we were lads and lasses long ago. Dick's step had an elasticity which it had never felt on the road from Golden Square to the city, although he had already walked five times that distance, and the young blood leaped in his veins like sparkling wine.

Presently the lane—which was a wide enough road, however—seemed to end abruptly, and to lead to the verge of a blood-red cliff beneath which lay the gleaming sea. Dick had seen blue glimpses of the ocean, here and there, before, for his way had lain along a range of

elevated moorland for miles by coach, but this sudden revelation of the great deep, literally at his very feet, almost took his breath away with admiration. He had beheld the Tower of London and St. Paul's without experiencing those tremendous sensations, which had been expected of him by Mr. Mickleham (who had taken him thither when he first came up to town), and had regarded even the commerce-bearing Thames with its crowded Pool with considerable equanimity ; but the scene now before him affected him to an extreme degree. He sat down upon the lane-side, and taking his knapsack from his back, drank in the gorgeous vision with that thirst which more lads feel for the sights of nature than dare to own it : for even in youth we soon learn to hold it weakness to be subject to impressions produced merely by the works of the Creator, as having little or no practical bearing. The long broken line of gray which marked the opposite coast had indescribable charms for Dick ; it might be Wales upon the map perhaps, but to him it was Fairyland. The stately vessels, so far off, that, notwithstanding their white wings, they appeared motionless, were floating mysteries ; the steamships, whose black pennants trailing through the sky proclaimed their course, outward or homeward bound, had each for him its story.

The hues of earth, and sea, and sky had changed, the noonday insect monotone had ceased, the air came cooler from the stream close by, which ever hurried o'er the cliff to meet the sea, when Dick took up his worldly goods again, and pursued his way once more ; for the road did really turn, though almost at right angles, a few yards short of the precipice, and immediately at the foot of the winding hill lay Salterleigh. It was a large village, hid in a beautiful ravine, apparently closed up to east-

ward by a thick wood, amid which could be seen a stream of silver, which was the waterfall for which the spot was famous ; southward, however, another hill, as steep as that which Dick was descending, afforded egress, in the strange case of anyone wishing to quit so fair a residence ; and westward was the one broad street that led to the harbour and the little pier. As the lad neared the high gray bridge which crossed the ravine, and gave access to the town, a mighty red and yellow placard, stuck on a fallen oak tree, like a vulgar libel on a dead hero's fame, arrested his attention.

STUPENDOUS ATTRACTION !!

Monarchs of the Desert and the Prairie !

The only Unicorn now Travelling !!

Largest Collection of Lions, Bengal Tigers, Leopards (striped and spotted), Serpents (inclusive of the so-called fabulous Sea-serpent), Nylghaus (from the Himalayas), "the Rugged Russian Bear" (Shakspeare), and others too numerous to mention !

QUEEN VICTORIA, PRINCE ALBERT, and the rest of the Royal Family !

Windsor Castle !

The Lion-tamer of Central Africa !

TICKEROCANDUA the Invincible !

The Earthman and Earthwoman (lowest of created Human Beings) having been engaged by the spirited proprietary at an immense expense, and for a few weeks only !

Refreshments for the Elephant to be obtained of Doll Jeeheeboy, only ; formerly Bheestie (Anglicè for Keeper of the Menagerie) to his Serene Highness Budgerow Khan !

A high premium given for Birds, Beasts, and Reptiles
(N.B. Must be unique).

TREDGOLD'S, late TRIMMING'S, Travelling Caravan.
Come Early.

“That's well,” said Dick to himself: “and I seem to have hit the place in the very nick of time.” He took out Lucidora's note once more, to make himself quite certain.

“MY DEAR YOUNG SIR—Here is the five pound note which I forgot to leave when I went to see you at the police-station. I also send, in case of nothing better turning up, a few lines to the head of an old travelling company. A living can at least be picked up in it, although, of course, not a very good one. Mr. Tredgold will take you on, I think, for the sake of me and of old times. I would not venture to propose such a thing, but that I hear your uncle means to turn you adrift in the world. I remember how fond, too, you always were of animals. The show is going through Devonshire just now, I see. Bridgewater, 17th (that was last week): Salterleigh, 24th; Barnstaple, 26th; Exeter, 28th. I wish I could help you to anything better, dear lad.—Yours,

“LUCIDORA.”

Salterleigh is never a very populous town—not even in the fashionable season, for it lies twenty miles from any railway, and the hills which lead thither from all sides are what nervous persons would call precipices—but on the present occasion it seemed to Dick to have been recently devastated by some plague. There was one old man, however, looking out of a window in the High Street, horizontally, so as to convey the idea of his being

in bed at the same time—which indeed he was—who informed the stranger that everybody was away to see the Beastesses, and that he himself, the speaker, could from his present elevated position catch a sight of the pictures in front of the principal caravan.

Following the direction of the eyes of this enthusiast, Dick presently came upon the only level spot which Salterleigh could boast of, situated in a romantic hollow of the gorge, usually dedicated to cricket, once a year to the wrestling which formed the principal attraction of the village fair, and on this particular day—unexampled in Salterleigh annals—to the menagerie aforesaid, whose twenty gigantic caravans arranged in an oblong, and covered over with tarpaulin, presented a material Paradise to so much of the population as could not raise the shilling demanded for admittance. These unhappy persons, some threescore in number, had been standing in front of the gigantic picture and the little flight of steps—that was a Jacob's ladder to them, upon which a more favoured race ascended and descended—from noon to eve, and even now evinced no signs of weariness. Besides the barest possibilities of good fortune—such as that of some caravan more top-heavy than its fellows falling sideways, and so revealing some hid treasure of natural history; or that more hopeless chance of the vinegar-faced woman, who sat in the shrine upon the platform, beckoning them up into the sacred place gratuitously, out of mere good nature—there was enough even outside the show to repay any reasonable expectations.

There were, in the first place, to be seen no less than thirteen beefeaters, and royal beefeaters, too, unless faith is to be denied to golden letters encircling black velvet caps—and in that case, where is Scepticism to cry halt? Each of these persons had some mighty instru-

ment of music, constructed, as it seemed, out of the trunks of golden elephants, cunningly fitting one into the other, and producing in combination a volume of sound which might well be designated imperial quarto. Once every two hours, these gorgeous persons took outside places upon the stage, and discoursed much eloquent wind-music: they were accustomed so to do in thickly populated cities, and were apparently unaware that they had long ago attracted every inhabitant of Salterleigh. Now and then, too, a stout and melancholy-looking gentleman, with a massive watchguard, who was rightly whispered to be the great Tredgold himself, would come to the front, and exclaim, in a sonorous voice; “Walk up, ladies and gentlemen”—at which the threescore would most passionately cheer—“and inspect the greatest wonder of the age. This is the only opportunity which will be afforded in this town, in consequence of the pressure of engagements, and on account of her Majesty Queen Victoria having bespoke the exhibition at Windsor Castle for the 14th of next month.” Then he would converse with the vinegar-faced woman in the shrine, as to the advisability, it was fondly conjectured, of lowering the price of admittance, for it was observed that she always shook her head malevolently, and nothing came of it.

Lastly there were sounds to be heard, nay sights to be seen, even by the outsiders, in connection with the animals themselves. The camel—or so said the village schoolmaster’s son, who ought to know, if anybody did—was heard to sneeze distinctly, and the elephant—the same authority settled it—to trumpet: although there were certain ignorant and stubborn persons who held this latter noise to be only Mr. Tredgold yawning. That gentleman did yawn pretty loudly, it must be confessed, as the evening drew on, and he still beheld the same

patient band standing in front of his own, and not “walking up” with a single shilling. The striped legs of the female hyena had been caught sight of—rather indelicately—by one fortunate outsider through a cranny, which had instantly been stopped up from within on his indiscreetly expressing his gratification; and one of the workhouse lads protested that he had beheld the jackal peering round the corner of the platform itself; upon cross-examination, however, this testimony broke down, the witness confessing that he was not prepared to swear it was not a specimen of the *canis communis* after all—the village clergyman’s own dog, which with a rash reliance upon its master’s sacred character, had accompanied him into the show, from which it subsequently emerged howling, and leaving a quarter of an inch of its curly tail in the possession of the racoon.

Dick elbowed his way through this shillingless crowd, whom he sincerely pitied, and ascended the steps amid a tempest of welcome from the band. The vinegar-faced woman smiled acidly upon him from her shrine, as saints both in and out of niches sometimes do, and her skinny hand closed like a snap-purse upon the expected coin. Dick hesitated a moment, doubtful as to whether it would be better to enter as a spectator and make his observations in that unprejudiced character, or to make known his desire of joining the company at once; Mrs. Tredgold, however, upon whose practical mind the lad’s dusty clothes and scanty knapsack had in a few seconds made their impression, decided this matter for him by calling out: “Now young man, be alive, if *you* please, and don’t *pervent* the nobility and gentry obtaining haccess to the hexhibition.”

Nature had given to this lady a voice sufficiently shrill, but she generally intensified it by speaking over

the edge of a small key, belonging to the cash-box, and held up to her withered lips whenever she was performing her pecuniary duties upon the platform. Her tone did not strike Dick as betokening a propitious frame of mind for welcoming an addition to the staff, and therefore he walked on and into the show without reply.





CHAPTER XXII.

A LECTURE UPON NATURAL HISTORY.

HE menagerie of Tredgold, late Trimming, was really a fine collection of animals in good condition, and something very different from those melancholy exhibitions made up of a few mangy camels and shuffling elephants which was all the natural history that travelled in the days of our fathers. There were eight caravans on either side the oblong, and a couple at both ends. Some of these were divided into two, three, or even four compartments: the female Hyena, for instance (whose legs had been so shamefully espied), occupying the ground floor—which, however, was, of course, the height of the caravan-wheel from the ground—and the Jackal the floor above; and a rather trying overhead lodger he must have been, in case that lady was nervous; for he spent the whole of his days and most of his nights in pacing to and fro like a sea-captain; and that not only upon the floor of his scanty chamber, but half way up the walls thereof—either through not being able to stop himself (for he was always in a state of great impetuosity, and as though he had just recollected some very particular appointment which must be kept immediately), or from some other reason known only to Buffon and his own mind. On the second floor resided a Badger of an evil odour, who, being very much ashamed

of himself, as he well might be, was always endeavouring to conceal his person from the public eye in a very insufficient quantity of straw. It was a painful position for any animal, aggravated in his particular case by the conduct of a couple of wild cats in the attics or third floor, who never ceased to express their disapprobation by hissing and pretending to expectorate. On the other hand, the next compartment was what is called in Edinburgh, a self-contained house—without flats—the whole of which was in the occupation of a Rhinoceros, whose horn had been exalted in a manner totally unconnected with the Eastern metaphor: for, having moulted or dropped off, or been knocked off the animal's nose (which retained merely a small knob, as if to mark the locality of the missing ornament) it was hung up on the top bars of his cage, to the wonder of the public, and the distress (as is but too probable) of its original possessor. Mental anxiety of some sort was at all events depicted upon his leathery countenance: while his hide bore unmistakable testimony, in its superfluous folds and excrescences, that it had been made for him to order (unless it was procured at second hand, which seems unlikely) at a period when he was a fatter and more prosperous beast.

By the time Dick's observations had extended thus far, the sagacious elephant Ninus (so called from there having been eight elephants before him under the Tredgold dynasty, of whom two yet remained) rang a mighty bell with his trunk, and the chief exhibitor exhorted the spectators to follow him round the establishment, and listen to his illustrated treatise upon the brute creation. The Salterleigh audience, who had done this five times already — for each of the performances was repeated every hour, with the view of edifying the fresh arrivals

that were supposed to be pouring into the exhibition momently—obeyed the summons with an alacrity which must have been gratifying indeed, one would have thought, to the feelings of any lecturer; but the gentleman in question, who had sent round his hat after the last four performances with its little appeal to the generosity of the public entirely unresponded to, took up his pole of reference as though it had been a pilgrim's staff, and as if he could willingly have delegated the privilege of dilating upon the affairs of the animal world to anybody else. His quick eye lit upon the only new face among the staring eyes and expanding mouths of his listeners, and to Dick he principally addressed his remarks, as to one who knew how to recompense as well as to appreciate instruction.

“Of all the pursuits calculated to enoble and refine the human mind, that of the study of natural history, when accompanied by living specimens, it has been agreed upon all hands, is the most advantageous; this is full of wonderful and interesting phenomenons—such as what they will touch, and what they will not touch, in the way of food, who are their natural enemies, how obedient they are to the eye of man (in this exhibition, entirely unassisted by the whip), and so on, from the gigantic elephant, three beautiful specimens of which are now before us, down to the *ridiculus mus*, or dormouse, so familiar to those around me, and doubtless kept in a lozenge box, or other warm receptacle, by many of them in their early childhood. Ninus, acquaint this gentleman with the knapsack, who is perhaps an artist, and wishes to take your picture, that you are very glad to see him. What! you won't say a word, my friend! That is very rude. You *are* glad to see him, I hope, at all events.”

Ninus being thus invoked, emitted a most awful sound, the reverberation whereof it doubtless was that had so gratified the outdoor spectators, and which Mr. Mopes (the exhibitor) explained was the affirmative of the animal—the elephantine “Yes.”

“And you don’t want him to go away again just yet,” continued he, “not till he has heard the lecture, and seen the Earthman and the Earthwoman, and beheld the lion-hunt conducted by the Invincible Tickercandua?”

Ninus being again called upon to reply, and feeling, as many other great personages feel in presence of the public, that he had no observation to make beyond that to which he had already given utterance, repeated the same.

“That is well, Ninus,” observed the exhibitor with hardihood. He now says “No,” you see; he does not want this young gentleman to go away. Give him a cake, Jeeheeboy, and *mind* (whispered he to the attendant black) *it’s one of the cayenne pepper ones; the haggeravating brute!*—Cakes and nuts, gentlemen, may be procured, as stated in the bills, of his keeper only, which he will pick up with his trunk, on having opened his mouth at the word of command— Young man,” observed the lecturer, suddenly interrupting himself, and addressing one of the more youthful of his hearers, “don’t let me see you a-doing that again, or you leave this exhibition directly minute; and I recommend you not to get into the way of that ’ere elephant, neither, any time this ten years. Hoysters indeed! A pretty thing to be offering an hoyster to a poor animal like that, who has not got even fingers to open it. Respect other persons’ tastes, Sir. How would *you* like half-a-dozen abernethies, and two quarts of nuts, with their shells on,

chucked down *your* throat, I wonder? And I'm sure you're opening your mouth wide enough, anyway.—The elephant, gentlemen and ladies, is sometimes called the whale of *terra firma*, and, indeed, he can exist for a considerable period under water by means of his trunk, which he elevates above the surface, as in the ordinary diving-bell; when the stream is not deep enough for total immersion, the ingenious animal converts this member into a garden-engine, and cools his body by spouting upon it volumes of water. These animals were made use of by Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, in his wars against the Romans; and that monarch had so high an opinion of their docility and right feeling, that he was on one occasion heard to observe that it was easier to turn the sun from its course, than any of those from the path of honour. The mahout, or elephant-driver, in India is armed with a steel weapon, which, being driven with considerable violence into its neck, the sagacious beast will immediately quicken its pace. Ninus and his two consorts—polygamy being permitted among this gigantic race—will presently go through the singular and interesting performance of standing on their own heads, and placing themselves in other classical attitudes."

Through the whole of this eulogium, the three elephants kept nodding their heads, as though in the gravest corroboration, and officiously presenting their trunks to each of the company (to the manifest perturbation of the Devonshire mind), as though they were touting with invisible cards for some advertising establishment.

"The Nylghau," observed Mr. Mopes, addressing his remarks to the animal so designated, who seemed to have been unable to make up his mind whether he should be an ox or an ass, and to have been punished for the indecision pretty severely by having had the hump of the dro-

medary clapped upon him—"is one of the most vicious of the natives of India. When meditating an attack, this insidious quadruped will fall upon his knees in a devotional attitude, shuffle on obsequiously a few paces, and then darting forward with a powerful spring, rarely fails to annihilate the astonished spectator.

"The Cāmēlēopārd and her young. This quadruped has justly been called the gentlest of animals, as well as being by far the tallest and most useless. The young one before you, which has only been ushered into the world a few days ago, is upwards of nine feet high, without which bountiful provision of nature in respect to altitude, he would be unable to partake of that refreshment which his tender age demands. His amble is very peculiar, and may be likened to the knight's move in chess, or the spectacle which might be afforded by a camp-stool in active motion. This creature commonly culls its food from the upper branches of tall trees, thus interfering with the requirements of no other animal; when reduced to crop the herbage of the ground, it has to set its forelegs exceedingly wide apart, in order to bring its mouth sufficiently low; and from that absurd position it surveys the landscape—being gifted with the attribute of looking backwards—from between its own hind-legs. When erect, it can, on any moderately level ground, observe the approach of an enemy from the other side, or nearly so, of the horizon, and can then make off—though unfortunately only up hill—at considerable speed.

"The Llama, which is sometimes designated the Camel of the East, in consequence of its being able to go for a lengthened period without water—and, of course, all other liquid refreshments—is good to eat, and also excellent for *paletons* or overcoats. Too easily attracted

by curiosity, alas, the hunter has only to lie on his back, with his heels in the air, and these confiding creatures will flock round him, as the boys of our country will surround a street exhibition; when even the discharge of his fatal weapon is considered (by the survivors) to form a part of the interesting performance. They are extensively used by the Peruvians as beasts of burden; but from the circumstance of their being very weak, excessively slow, and obstinate beyond belief by persons who have been only accustomed to mules, there is little probability of their superseding the horse amongst ourselves. The Llama is a native of South America, but it is occasionally found in Tibet, where it is held in the greatest veneration, and even worship — probably on account of its rarity.

It was a characteristic of Mr. Mopes' lectures, which Dick, of course, did not get acquainted with till afterwards, that on days when the company were numerous, and their donations liberal, his accounts of the animals he described were eulogistic, and even flattering; whereas on unsatisfactory occasions, such as the present, when Mr. Mopes' mind was stoured by a lack of appreciation, they were detractory and calumnious.

“The Brown Bear, in common with the rest of his species, has the power of sitting, and even walking, in an erect position, as well as that of climbing trees; but he doesn't do any of it well. It is said that he will not attack a person sleeping; but this, I think, from what *I* know of him, must mean when the bear is sleeping, and not the man. He is a fierce and remorseless animal, and we keepers who have to venture into his compartment risk our lives for a comparatively trifling consideration. Observe his claws, gentlemen and ladies, and how he stuffs his fore-paws into his mouth, as though for

want of a human sacrifice. It looks like toothache, but it's nothing of that sort, I do assure you.

"This animal, with the partially shaved countenance, and the inadequate white shirt, is the Guereza Monkey, a native of Africa, the climate of which can alone excuse such insufficiency of clothing. From the bush-like termination of its tail, which commonly forms its cushion, combined with the contemplative expression of its countenance, it is sometimes confused with the fabled Rum-tumfoozleum, so familiar to many of my hearers as the animal who 'sits upon the tip of his tail a-wondering at the ordinances of nature ;' but this is not the case."

Mr. Mopes' harangue became wearisome enough to Dick by this time, who, from much acquaintance with the Zoological Gardens, knew almost as much about the subject as did the lecturer ; but he was too astute a lad to disgust one who would probably be his future companion, by exhibiting the indifference he really felt. He therefore accompanied him in his tour round the four quarters of the globe, and his researches into earth and sky with laudable attention, laughing only when Mr. Mopes laughed, which was seldom, and not during the delivery of his more eloquent passages, where the fun was not so obvious to the narrator as to his hearers—a rule that it is well to observe at lectures of a more scientific character.

The most interesting of all the animals in Dick's eyes, although those about which Mr. Mopes had least to say, were the lions and tigers, who occupied three contiguous dens—the lions by themselves, the tigers by themselves, and in the third den a lion and a tigress together. What a contrast was there between the appearance of the king of beasts—extended at full length, slumbrous and resigned, but far from torpid, with its calm earnest eyes

half open, conscious alike of strength and of captivity—and that of his fellow-prisoner, whose eye seemed to speak fire against every created creature, during that noiseless but impatient pacing to and fro, and whose awful throat to send forth from time to time the very name of the author of her woes, and the object on which her revengeful heart was brooding—"Man, Man!" With what care, too, despite her wrath, when her rapid stride led her across the lion's extended paws, did she pick her way, cautious not to offend the powerful; and what a murderous sneer she wore at sight of the exhibitor, whose approach she awaited poised upon three legs, a monument of ferocious beauty, as though the hour of her deliverance was at last at hand, and he who was about to confer the benefit should be the first to rue it.

"Did Tickerocandua enter that very cage?" was Dick's inquiry.

"Certainly," returned Mr. Mopes; "leastways when there was any encouragement afforded by the spectators, he did so. Under present circumstances, which were humiliating to him as a Briton and a believer in the perfectibility of the human race, such a course was out of the question; but even now the Lion-tamer of Central Africa would go through his astounding performances with the three lions and four lionesses in the neighbouring compartment, as advertised in the bills. Whether folks were real gentry, or merely rubbish," added Mr. Mopes with meaning, "word is always kept with the public in every case."

"And does the Lion-hunter venture among those tigers by themselves?" inquired Dick with interest, and pointing to that far from Happy Family of *Felinæ* in question, who, ceaselessly winding in and out, and over and under one another, seemed to be treading some

terrible tiger-measure to a running accompaniment of snarls and growls.

“ Does he go in among *them* tender-hearted critturs? ” echoed Mr. Mopes, with derisive scorn ; “ why, not if he knows it ; no.” By which that gentleman did not mean to convey the impression that Tickerocandua ever visited them unconsciously, as in his sleep, but that if he were so rash as to do such a thing at all, the performance would not be repeated.

“ The Earthman and the Earthwoman will now make their appearance,” exclaimed the lecturer ; and as he spoke, the pair alluded to descended a little ladder leading from one of the two caravans occupied as dwelling-houses, and made their bows to the company. Little akin to humanity as this couple were, they illustrated the poet’s statement, that “ Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long,” by their respective garments, which seemed to be entirely formed of strings of shells, and which, as they moved, made a pleasant tinkling like that of sheep-bells ; they could hardly have been put on, however, for a similar purpose, since the wearers were not of a character to become lost or indistinguishable among any amount of their fellow-creatures. The Earthman and the Earthwoman had a certain (perhaps) earthy odour about them, which, independently of the shells, made you aware of their presence at a considerable distance : their hue was an unhealthy brown, relieved by red and yellow spots, wherewith they tattooed themselves precisely as the peripatetic cake-dealers of the humbler sort are wont to sprinkle their gingerbread. Round their waists and arms they wore German-silver rings of a mighty thickness, which gave them the appearance of having just been released from personal confinement, in order to go through their “ characteristic war-

dance ;" and the only vocabulary of which they were possessed consisted, or seemed to do so, of two words—*Woggadaboo*, signifying "How do you do?" and *Wiggridy*, which was Earthen for "Thank you, Sir."

It is to be hoped, that as they were unable to speak the English tongue, so were they mercifully debarred from understanding it when spoken by their exhibitor. "This is the Earthman and the Earthwoman, gentlemen and ladies," exclaimed Mr. Mopes, dexterously insinuating, by emphasis, the immense difference that lay between barbarism and civilisation, "and it is supposed that they are the lowest of created human beings. It has been conjectured by some that they are more akin to the ourangoutang, or wild man of the woods, whose acquaintance we have just been cultivating, than to the human ; but this is easily disproved by the inspection of the toes or fingers ; and, moreover, the interesting specimens now before us live where there are no woods, but in holes of the earth, after the manner of the rabbit or cony, and hence their name. The taller one is, of course, the male, who is, however, kept under strict control, and sometimes even beaten by the female, which, again, materially strengthens their position as being allied to the human family. They will perform their characteristic war-dance, accompanied by singing ; after which they will go round the company and wish them 'good-bye,' by shaking hands, an accomplishment they have been recently taught with infinite pains and trouble : the mode of salutation among themselves—that of rubbing each other's noses briskly together for several seconds—having been found almost ineradicable."

At the conclusion of this eulogium, the Earthman and Earthwoman began to jump about in their characteristic, but rather alarming manner, at the same time

uttering a war-cry compounded of the words Woggadaboo and Wiggidy ; after which they pervaded the spectators, who pressed as eagerly forward for a clasp of their clammy hands as though they were monarchs (which, indeed, they were said to be, in Earthland), and touching for the king's-evil.

These ceremonies being ended, and the elephants having duly stood, according to the programme, "upon their own heads"—which, indeed, if they must needs stand on any, it was quite as well they should have done—and placed themselves in other "classical attitudes," Mr. Mopes announced that "the performance would now conclude with the unique exhibition of Tickerocandua the Invincible, in his tremendous character of the Lion-hunter of Central Africa ; the only tamer of the Monarch of the Forest now travelling, who could be relied upon with confidence for not having his head bitten off, or other unpleasant accident occurring, which but too often turned, what the public had expected to be a harmless exhibition, into a most distressing spectacle.—It was usual at this stage of the proceedings for those who were satisfied with the lecturer to bestow upon him some small pecuniary trifle, the amount of which was left to the ladies and gentlemen themselves."

At these words, the attention of all Salterleigh became at once engrossed by things which had had no sort of previous interest for them ; such as the wood-work and bars of the caravans, the tarpaulin that roofed the exhibition, their clergyman's dog, and, in short, every object which they could admire without laying themselves under an obligation to Mr. Mopes ; who, on his part, smiled sardonically, and inquired audibly of Dick, as he flipped that young gentleman's sixpence perpendicularly in air, whether he had ever seen such a heap of

mean ones out of Devonshire. The question would have been rather an embarrassing one to answer without offence to either party ; but luckily, at that moment, Tickerocandua the Invincible was seen descending the ladder of the same caravan which had already sent forth the Earthman and his consort, and Mr. Mopes turned upon his heel, with the air of a monarch who feels indeed that the hour of deposition has arrived, but who, for his part, scorns to bow his regal knee to the coming usurper.





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LION TAMER.

THE personal aspect of the Lion Tamer of Central Africa was certainly impressive in a very high degree. His actual height could scarcely have been less than six feet two, while it was artificially raised by a circlet of eagles' feathers set in a coronet, which the majority of enraptured beholders believed to be constructed of virgin gold. A leopard-skin, worn somewhat after the manner of a Scotch plaid, set off a jerkin of green leather, while his legs were encased in a pair of huge jack-boots. Such was the costume in which Tickerocandua's proprietors would have it supposed that he pursued the King of Beasts in the arid plains of his native land, armed only with an ordinary-looking carter's whip, which he carried, however, with an air as though it had been the sceptre of Timbuctoo.

He was undeniably a magnificent-looking fellow, to whom not even the luxuriant tresses which were swept back from his forehead in the style *Acrobatique*, could impart a touch of effeminacy; and as he trod the floor with abstracted air, he looked every inch as much a king as any playactor, and, it is probable, a vast deal more so than any actual occupant of a throne. Gazing neither to the right hand nor to the left, he gravely approached

the cage where the lions were awaiting him, by no means as though he were an article of consumption, especially decorated for their table (as would have been *my* feeling, or yours, brave reader, in such a case), but rather as though he had “a crow to pick,” as the expression runs, with one of them—an account which it distressed him as their ruler and natural protector to have to settle. In execution of this painful duty, therefore, as soon as he had deliberately opened the cage-door, just wide enough to admit himself, and bolted it on the inside, he applied his whip with considerable energy to that monarch of the desert, who happened to be making the greatest roaring of the seven; then seizing him by a great handful of mane, he forced him to stand upon his hind legs, and rest his massive forepaws upon his own breast, in which position he stood for a minute or two, the lion looking straight into his face with the eye of an epicure regarding his first morsel, and Tickerocandua looking at the lion as though he would like to see him at it. Then disentangling himself of the King of Beasts by the simple process of throwing him backwards, he took up an exceedingly small wooden hoop, and requested, in ceremonious dumb show—as though he were conferring the Order of the Garter upon some distinguished courtier—that the largest quadruped there present should leap through it without the previous precaution (which seemed absolutely necessary) of taking off his head and shoulders; the thing appeared only one degree less preposterous than a request that the camel over the way should attempt the eye of a needle; but at the second crack of the whip, and after a single groan of remonstrance from the lion, the creature darted through it, fitting it closely indeed as a bullet its barrel, but with all that shaggy amplitude of mane shrunk down to no-

thing—laid back like the ears of a vicious horse on the one side of the hoop, and reasserting itself on the other like the quills of an exceedingly fretful porcupine.

In addition to this example of what the professional lion-hunter (as well as the lion) has to go through in Central Africa, Tickerocandua now inserted a couple of ridiculously narrow shelves in the back of the cage for the accommodation of a pair of lionesses ; and arranging the remaining five animals in the form of a sleeping-couch, he reclined upon them in a luxurious attitude, while those dangerous-looking cherubs watched over him from their exalted position. Finally, having received a carbine from the hands of Mr. Mopes, and compelled the whole of the animals to leap many times over his head and shoulders at full gallop, he drove the seven into a corner, snarling and growling, and discharged among them, from his deadly weapon, a penny-worth of—powder—a ceremony which concluded the representation of the method of conducting lion-hunts.

During the whole of this spectacle Dick was transported with delight ; he had never imagined such a mastery over creatures he had so often admired and dreaded was attainable, and he looked upon him who had achieved it, as the bravest, and perhaps the best of men. There was so undisguised an expression of worship in his countenance, that Tickerocandua himself, accustomed as he was to the incense of public adoration, bowed to the lad in a stately manner as he passed through the crowd ; and when he reached his caravan, and felt Dick's hand laid reverently upon his tiger-skin, he observed, in a voice less regal than might have been expected, and even a little thick, “Well, what is it, young un ? Would you like to make your living among wild beastesses like me ?”

Dick replied respectfully that such was not only his wish, but his settled intention.

“Why, bless my liver,” replied Tickerocandua, whose name, in private life, by-the-bye, was Robinson, and whose knowledge of Central Africa was derived from oral tradition rather than from personal experience, or from books ; “Why, bless my liver, I never seed a young fellow of your age bit so—never ! Boys, ay, and sometimes gals too, I *have* seen bit ; but a young man like you—Lord love you, go away home to your mother, do, for the hexhibition’s closing !”

“I am going to belong to your company,” returned Dick earnestly. “I have got a letter from Mr. Trimming, who used to have the show, or at least from Mrs. Trimming, to Mr. Tredgold, to ask him to take me on here.”

“Eh, what ? Mrs. Trimming !” ejaculated the beast-tamer ; “a young ooman with dark hair and eyes, as was Lion Queen here for a little time, only nothing would ever induce her to go in among the hanimals, and her name is Lucidora ?”

“Ay, that’s her,” replied Dick.

“Come up along with me then,” returned Tickerocandua, as he led the way up the steps of the caravan ; “we have plenty of time for a little chat together about old friends, for master and missus are at supper at present, and hates to be disturbed over their wittles as much as the creeturs themselves.”

The caravan was of polished deal and consisted of three apartments—one devoted to the Lion Hunter of Central Africa, one to the Earthwoman and her consort, and one to the purposes of a common sitting-room. The privacy of each apartment, however, was not so great as these arrangements implied, the partitions being by no

means sound proof; and, indeed, throughout the subsequent conversation which was held in Tickerocandua's sleeping-apartment, the words Woggadaboo and Wiggidy made themselves distinctly heard through the single plank which intervened between Dick and his new friend and the two aborigines from the Mountains of the Moon. The convenience, however, if not the seclusion of the arrangements, was undeniable; the furniture was good if not plentiful, while every article of it had some use beside that which its outward appearance indicated. Not only was "the bed by night a chest-of-drawers by day," but one of the chairs hung down perpendicularly from the wall, until it was wanted, and the other turned over (sometimes when it was *not* wanted) and became a washing-stand. There were little cupboards, too, like rabbit-hutches, for the keeping of all sorts of properties, hanging round the room in default of pictures, and one of them was the cellar, wherefrom Tickerocandua produced a bottle of spirits, and drank Dick's health out of it straightway, without the intervention of a glass.

"I always find that's good for me," exclaimed he, "whenever I get away from those precious lions."

To this Dick responded, "Ah!" merely, like a prudent lad; but he thought within himself, that if the Lion Hunter of Central Africa performed that beneficial ceremony after each of his representations, and the representations took place every hour, he must get through a good deal of Hollands in the course of the day.

Could it be possible, then, that Tickerocandua stood in need of Dutch courage? That he was acting a part that he was not equal to, and that when the play was over for the time, such a stimulant was necessary to recover him from subsequent reaction? As Tickerocandua took off his crown of eagle feathers, and passed his hand

over his brow, with something like a sigh, it seemed to the lad that such indeed might be the case. The tone of the beast-tamer, however, was blithe and jovial enough, as he asked after his old acquaintance, Richard Trimming—just such a careless self-congratulatory tone, in short, as that in which men usually do ask after one who has been a boon-companion to them for some little way on the road of life, but since then, it is likely may have taken a wrong turning.

“Well,” answered the lad laughing, “he lives by photography, just at present.”

“I was afraid that 'ud be it,” observed the other gravely, “and I'm sorry for it. An honest livelihood is the best, be it ever so hard a one.”

“Oh, its honest enough,” explained Dick hastily, “as far as that goes ; he lives by taking other people's faces, that's all.”

“Dear, dear ! so poor Dick has got to that, has he ? We always said there was need to hold one's hat on with both hands in his company, and that even then he would be sure to pick one's pockets. Such a clever fellow, too, and not to make anything of his chances after all ? Why this 'ere Travelling Hexhibition must have been worth at least twenty pounds per week to him. There was a yellow-throated sloth in it at that time as was five hundred pounds to begin with in any man's purse—always a throwing itself upon its back, and requestin' of the public to come on if they dared for a scratch-match : and yet they do say Trimming lost the whole biling of it at three-card loo in six months. He was an awful gambler, was Dick ; the best card-player, billiard-player, skittle-player, and what not, as was to be looked on ; but nothing ever comes of that worth speaking of ; it's light come, light go ; or else there's somebody else as is always just a point or

two beyond you ; that's where it is. Did Dick ever tell you how he did the Yankees over the water ? ”

“ He told me some queer things of his own doings but I don't think he ever told me that,” replied the lad.

“ Well, it was in the days of Trimming's luck, and he had some six hundred pounds to the good about him ; so what does he do but goes to New York and loses a little of it in the best of the public billiard-rooms, and then by rail and coach to the far West, stopping at every big place to lose some more ; and dropping here a little and there a little all the way as though it were a paper-chase, with dollar notes. When he got to Buffalor, or some such wild-beast sort of a name, he had but twelve pounds belonging to him to bring him back to England, and then he began to calculate that it was about time to think of making his fortune. So he played a little better at Buffalor, and commenced to win instead of lose ; and then a good deal better at each of the places at which he had been defeated—“picked up” as the saying is — on his way West. Those who had found him an easy victory before, could scarcely understand how a man's play could so improve in ten days' time, and were riled thereby most uncommon, but of course they had to pay when they lost. When he got back to New York itself, he put the pot on to a very considerable extent, and won a heap of dollars nightly ; he told me that he did not get less than a couple of thousand pounds, in all, out of that same room ; and he would have made more, only one night an accident happened which might have been rather serious. He perceived, by the behaviour of some of the players, that he had been “blown upon”—got found out in fact—and by their savage looks and whispers among themselves, that a quarrel was going to be picked with him, after which, as

he well knew, he would have to take one of Colonel Colt's lead pills, or become a sheath for a bowie knife. He saw he would never be permitted to get clear away from them rooms again, and yet he had every farthing of money he possessed in the world at that moment about his person. He had won three or four hundred dollars already that very evening, and he placed the notes ostentatiously upon the mantelpiece as he went on with his game ; then having contrived to cut his hand with the brass rim of a pocket so as to make it bleed, he left the room under pretence of going to wash it, in his shirt-sleeves, indeed, but with a whole skin. He never came back either for his coat or his money, but went right away, and put himself under the protection of the police, until the steamer started for England."

"And did he get safe home with all the rest he had won ?" inquired Dick, who could scarcely reconcile such a fact with the sky-parlour and modest manner of life affected by the gentleman in question, since he had had the advantage of his acquaintance.

"Ay, that he did, and lived like a fighting-cock upon it for six months or so, by which time it was all gone and more with it ; he was reduced, indeed, so low on that particular occasion, I remember, that he had to take to the Dumby Dodge."

"The Dumby Dodge ?" remarked Dick interrogatively ; "I never heard of that, I think."

"Well, my boy, it's a profession that few people take up with for choice, and until most other trades have failed. You go about to sporting public-houses—them in the dog-line principally—and stick pins into yourself for the gratification of the nobility and gentry ; that's what is called the Dumby Dodge—because, I suppose, you don't holler out when they hurt you. Dick Trim-

ming had great natural gifts in that way, and couldn't feel, bless you, in the arms no more than if they had been stuffed with sawdust ; his lips in particular, might have been orange peel for all that they cared about pins. But he had his tender pints, of course, and suffered accordingly. For my part, I should not like to see it done, a bit better than to make a pincushion of my own carcass, but different persons are differently constituted : and for the matter of that, it aint a usual thing to lock oneself up with half-a-dozen lions and lionesses, ten times a-day, for the enjoyment of one's fellow-creatures."

"That's true," returned Dick, "I never expected to see you come out of that cage alive to-day."

"Well, I've done that same trick," remarked Tickerocandua coolly, and entering a figure in his note-book, "exactly three thousand times in the last four years ; I keep account of it, so that when my time does come, my successor may know exactly what he has to look to. Except Newcomo, the lion-tamer belonging to Edwards' concern, that was Wombwell's—and is the largest hexhibition as travels, for all what our advertising bill says—I gives in to no man for pluck and steadiness ; but it's a bad trade—a dangerous game, young man"—(here Mr. Robinson took another pull at the gin bottle, as if to conceal a passing shudder)—"and I should never advise you, nor anybody else, to take to it, if half the money, ay, or a quarter of it, is to be made by other means. The man who was here as lion-tamer just before me, was a black man, and would have been safe, one would have thought—to look at him—from any animal that hadn't a very depraved happenstance, indeed ; and yet that 'ere tigress in the fourth caravan from this—"

"The beautiful creature that is in the same cage with the lion ?" interrupted Dick ; "I saw her lying down to

rest as soon as she found she was not wanted, and sleeping through all the noise and tumult of the hunt next door, as though she were in her native jungle."

"Sleeping!" exclaimed Tickerocandua contemptuously, "that striped devil never sleeps. She does nothing but shut her eyes, and think of human flesh; that's *my* belief. She made but one bite at that poor darkey, it's true, but you might have put your head in the hole a'most."

"Has that tigress eaten a man, then?" demanded Dick with horror.

"She has *killed* a man, and eaten as much as she could of him," returned the beast tamer. "I was telegraphed for from London, and took his place within twenty-four hours afterwards. People aint picked up in every town that'll accept such appointments as this, you see, and particularly after these little accidents. I had been bred up to the work all my life, and was well worth my salary, high as it is, as Tredgold very well knew. Why, it was I who introduced the lion-hunt into this shop. I am the man that draws the company. If there wasn't a chance of seeing me eaten up alive ten times a-day, why, how would this show be filled, I should like to know? Do you suppose they'd stand a-gaping at them elephants all day if there wasn't something startling to follow? Don't they get tired enough of that fool Mopes' talk about the creeturs' intelligence—and the beasts are sharp enough, it's true—and affectionate docility, and so forth. Oh, lor! just you ask Doll Jeeheeboy about *that*! He knows something about their gentlenesses, he does; he could have shown you, one day, five smashed-in ribs and a broken arm in proof of it. I shall never forget him a-lying under that angelic-tempered Ninus, who had his off forefoot lifted up to finish him with, nor the voice in which he cried out, 'Oh Niney, Niney, what

are you a-doing on?' as though he would expostulate with the terrible creetur."

"But he did spare him, did he not," returned Dick, "or how comes it that the poor fellow is alive?"

"Oh yes, he spared him, just as the cat spares the mouse when he is tired of torturing it, for a little, being always certain of his victim. The beast would let none of us go into the den and drag Doll out; however, one of the visitors went in—a parson he was, and as milk-soppy a chap to look at as ever you saw; but he was a brave gentleman. He said as how the same Power as saved Daniel from the lions would help him then in doing a good action. That was what I call bringing the Scriptures home to a fellow, that is; and, for my part, I wish I could feel like him when I put on my boots and feathers every morning."

"You are not afraid, however," said Dick; "I am sure of that."

"Afraid!" returned the other scornfully; "well, I should think not; what made you put such a question to *me*, I'd like to know? I flatter myself that none of *my* feathers are white ones. No, no; but let the pitcher go to the well no matter how *often*," added the beast tamer gravely, "it must needs come to smash at last. It's risky, you see—the thing *is* risky, after all—there, that's my last pull at the bottle for this evening;" and with those words Tickerocandua replaced the tempter in its pigeon-hole.

"But how did you pluck up courage to go in among the creatures for the first time?" persisted Dick. "I can fancy custom reconciling a man even to such a trade as yours; but the apprenticeship seems the wonder."

"Well, you see, there were only two—a lion and a lioness—when I first came, for the tigress I would then

have nothing to do with ; and I could keep my eye on both of them at once ; and when I got to be straight with them, the others were added, one by one, and seeing the old stagers behaving civilly to me, they did the same ; for all the world like human beings. They are jealous and suspicious of one another, too, and don't know how to pull together, thank Heaven ; beside which, they are afraid of the whip."

"I should have thought they could have scarcely felt such a thing as that," observed Dick, pointing to the weapon in question ; "why, the thong is scarcely so thick as that of an ordinary carter's whip."

"Lift the other end," replied Tickerocandua grimly ; "and then tell me what you think of it."

"Why, it's loaded," cried the astonished lad ; "it's nothing less than a tremendous life-preserver."

"Just so," returned the other coolly ; "but it is unnecessary to mention it to the general public. They would not be half so pleased if they thought I could defend myself. One tap on the right place from that there seeming bit of leather, and not a lion living but must go down before it, like a pin in a skittle-alley."

"You'd hit him on the head, I suppose ?" inquired Dick with interest.

"Well, you see, you're an outsider at present, young man, and these things are secrets of the profession ; but I don't mind telling you this much, that you might beat one of them lions about the head for half an hour with that there loaded handle, and he wouldn't know but what you were only killing his fleas for him. And speaking of fleas—of which there are a great many in this here shop, although they are never mentioned among the Collection in the bills—do you know that it is about time to turn in ? for we keep early hours ; Mr. and Mrs.

T., too, must have done their supper this long time. You can have that mattress yonder for to-night, if they will give you leave, but afterwards you must sleep out in lodgings. Nobody but me and that Earthenware lot, as I calls 'em"—and Mr. Robinson pointed with his thumb to the apartment occupied by the lady and gentleman from the Mountains of the Moon—"being permitted to have quarters in the Hexhibition at night."

"Then to whom does that beautiful caravan next door belong?" inquired Dick.

"To the master and mistress, of course," replied Tickerocandua, with an air such as a sentry at Windsor Castle might assume, if he were asked who resided *there*. "It aint far for you to walk; only take care of the steps, which are steepish; and if you went a cropper down them, you might pitch on to the glass box full of serpents, which aint a pleasant family to break in upon unexpected, I can tell you."

With this friendly piece of parting advice, the Lion Tamer of Central Africa set up his bed, which was exactly like the flap of a dinner-table, and proceeded to divest himself of his jack-boots and tiger-skin.





CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. AND MRS. TREDGOLD.

SA KING exceeding care not to disturb the great family of *ophidia*, snugly reposing in their blankets of many folds, Mr. Richard Arbour once more descended into the exhibition. The place was quite deserted of human occupants, all the duties of the company in connection with the brute creation having been fulfilled. Only a stifled bark from the jackal proclaimed his sense of wrong at not being let out to the grave-yards upon so beautiful a summer night, and a disappointed cry from the cheetah, intimated that he was hunting in his dreams, and had just missed his spring at a phantom antelope. The horned owl, indeed, was wide awake, with his ears unnecessarily erect, and his eyes exceedingly like a pair of policeman's lanterns, fixed suspiciously on nothing particular; but, as he was never known to be otherwise, it is not necessary to except either him, or the weasel, from the general drowsiness. The stork, with a misdirected economy, was husbanding one of her spindle legs as usual, by making the other do double duty, and had wrapped her wing carefully about her head, as a servant girl carries her prayer-book in her handkerchief. A monkey or two swung by their tails, like pendulums, as if anxious to take note of time even while they slept; and the por-

cupines were huddled together in a manner to make a thin-skinned spectator shudder, and with a natural affection overcoming circumstance greater than their brethren of the quill, the poets, ever described in song.

The rap which Dick administered with the highly-polished knocker upon the highly-polished door of Mr. Tredgold's residence, did resound amid the general silence rather alarmingly ; but he was not prepared to hear the bolt shot with great sharpness upon the other side, and a tremulous voice demanding through the keyhole what was the matter, and in particular, whether that confounded alligator was about again.

This interesting quadruped, as Dick subsequently learned, was a recent addition to the collection, and the bane of its proprietor's existence. That benevolent gentleman had caused a mighty bath to be prepared for it, and had let it out, upon one occasion, for the express purpose of its taking its natural refreshment therein ; but instead of doing so, the animal had snapped at the company generally, and pursued his keeper round the show for upwards of an hour, with his mouth open, to the estimated extent of thirteen feet. Spare iron bars from the cages had been plunged into that dreadful vacuum, only to be snapped in pieces like slate-pencils ; and he was only captured at last by means of a casting-net, in which an experienced fisherman entangled the amphibious beast, after a chase which lasted for an entire afternoon.

“What is loose, then, if it aint the alligator ?” demanded the voice again in tones a little reassured ; “it isn't that there abominable nylghau I do hope, nor yet the puma ?”

“No, Sir,” replied Dick, half suffocated with laughter ; “it's only me ; and I've got a letter for you.”

At these words the door was opened slowly and cautiously, as though Mr. Tredgold were yet unsatisfied that they might not be the ruse of some subtle animal devised to put him off his guard, and gain admittance into the caravan. "And who are you, Sir?" demanded the proprietor fiercely, as soon as he saw how little formidable his visitor really was. "Who the deuce are you, Sir, and who is your letter from?"

"My name is Richard Arbour, who is seeking employment in your service, Sir; and the letter is from Mrs., or at least from the young woman that—"

"From *whom?*" cried a voice so shrill that it almost set Dick's teeth on edge, and so close to his ear that he could hardly think a plank, however thin, interposed between him and the speaker. "Bring it in directly, Mr. Tredgold: I *insist* upon knowing who it comes from."

"You may fetch it yourself, Madam, if you feel so excessively anxious about it," replied that gentleman, winking wickedly at Dick, and by rapid pantomimic action making him aware that Mrs. T. had her nightcap on, and was not in costume suitable for her appearance before a stranger.

"It's a business letter, my love, respecting the taking on of an additional hand into the establishment, and has nothing to do with you whatever."

There was a rustling sound as though somebody were getting into a silk dress in a very excited manner, and in another moment the mistress of the caravan was in the apartment, thinner, and so to speak, skimpier than ever, in consequence probably of some deficiency of under-garment, and wearing a bonnet over what was most certainly never intended to be a bonnet-cap.

"Let me look at that note this instant, Sir!"

Mr. Tredgold was a particularly stout person, and as

he held the letter on high with one hand, and waved that lady spare away with the other, Dick bethought him how glad Mr. Sunstroke would have been to get them both upon a slide, as an allegory of Plenty defying Famine.

“Who is it, Mr. Tredgold? I insist upon being told. What is the name, boy, of this young female, who ventures to address a letter to my husband?”

“Don’t tell her,” ejaculated the proprietor, “or you shall have no place in my service.”

“You shall never put foot inside his establishment, unless you do,” responded the lady.

Here was a dilemma which threatened to defy all Dick’s powers of conciliation and finesse, had not Mrs. T. herself put an end to it, by catching sight of the signature of the missive as it fluttered tantalisingly above her head. “You wicked, base, abominable man,” cried she; “how dare you flaunt such a name as that before my very eyes, and under my own roof-tree! *This* is why you have been so short, and short, and short again of money, is it—for this—I don’t know how long! Lucidora, forsooth! What, that trapesing wanton baggage as went away with Trimming, is it? Oh, you’re a nice respectable sort of married man, *you* are! I suppose she acknowledges your last twenty-pound note, or so, and wants another, I’ll be bound.”

“You are a pig-headed old she-unicorn!” responded Mr. Tredgold with some rudeness; “and you may read the letter, and answer it too, yourself, for all I care.”

The unicorn was a term of severe reproach among Mr. Tredgold’s company, from the circumstance of its forming a constant subject of complaint from the visitors; the more simple of whom perceiving it advertised in the bills, were induced to expect its appearance among the

animals, and were apt to be dissatisfied with the substitution of the rhinoceros in its stead, and the information from Mr. Mopes, that that comparatively familiar quadruped was supposed to be the Unicorn of the Ancients. Nevertheless, Mrs. Tredgold's curiosity overcame her indignation, and she applied herself to Lucidora's communication without reply.

“My dear Mr. Tredgold (“*Her* dear Mr. Tredgold, indeed ! hoity, toity, well I like that ! Oh, you infamous woman !” and the lady shook a bony finger at space, as though it were a female of unprincipled character). *As an old friend* (“Ay, old enough to know better, goodness knows ; Miss Lucidora was no chicken when she came here, for all she pretended to be so childish and timorous”), *and for the sake of old times* (“Very pretty, upon my word and honour ; I wonder what she is going to say next !”) *I want you to grant me privately a little request.* (“Heavens, Mr. Tredgold ! am I to read any more of this abominable communication ? I feel my ears tingling from top to toe with shame already.” Mr. Tredgold muttered something about his being unaware that her ears had any toes, and even that it would do some people’s ears good if they were made to tingle after another fashion.) *This is, that you will admit the young gentleman who is the bearer of this letter, and in whom I take a very great interest* (“Oh, indeed, you then, child, are a victim of this—this disrespectful hussy likewise, are you ?”) *into your company as exhibitor, or in some other remunerative office for which he may be fitted.* *Mr. Trimming desires his best regards to Mrs. Tredgold* (“impudent fellow !”) *and yourself ; and believe me to be yours faithfully*”—“Hers what ? Oh the brazen-faced creature ! Faithfully, forsooth ! Do you hear *that*, Mr. Tredgold ?”

“Hear it !” echoed that gentleman. “No, I don’t hear

it: hearing is no name for being pierced by such a cracked penny-trumpet; you will split the drum of my ear."

"Yours faithfully, *Lucidora*," gasped Mrs. Tredgold without seeming to notice the observations of her irritated consort, but with a certain mitigation in the ferocity of her manner, too. "So you thought to ingratiate yourself with me, young man, did you, by bringing the recommendation of such a female, the disgraceful companion——"

"Madam," interrupted Dick with firmness, "the person you allude to has been very kind to me; if you have no place for me in your establishment, I must try my fortune elsewhere, but I cannot stand by and hear her spoken of in this manner."

"You are right, lad," observed Mr. Tredgold decisively, "and I like you for defending your friend: he is quite right, I say, woman, and do you be quiet. I regret that we have no suitable occupation to offer you in the present juncture of circumstances (which was Mr. Tredgold's favourite pleonasm for "now"), but Mr. Mopes suits us very well as chief exhibitor, and Mr. Taper is good enough in his absence. We have nothing, absolutely nothing, at our disposal."

"Except the part of second butcher," interposed Mrs. Tredgold, sardonically. "Bairman declares he cannot do his work much longer without an assistant; you may help *him*, if you like, at ten shillings a-week, young man; but that place, I suppose, would hardly suit such a fine young gentleman as you."

At this advantageous proposal, Dick looked up without much rapture; but perceiving Mr. Tredgold telegraphing over his wife's shoulder that he should accept the situation, he replied meekly: "Any place, Madam,

however humble, in *your* establishment, must needs be a respectable position for one in my circumstances. With your good leave, I will enter upon my duties to-morrow morning."

Mrs. Tredgold had expected her proposition would have choked off the youth, and his humility disarmed her indignation. Her heart, too, was not without the soft place in it peculiar to females of every age, and Dick's good looks, despite the disadvantages of candle-light and dusty raiment, had made some way with her. Moreover, she knew that to retract her offer would aggravate her husband beyond judicious limits. She had her way in all domestic matters, and was permitted a considerable freedom of language and choice of epithet, but Mr. Tredgold was master in his own caravan, after all. She knew how far she could venture in vituperation, to an adjective, and could detect the notices of danger in her husband's answers, as though she were a railway engine-driver, and he a flag-policeman. When he used the expression, "you pig-headed old she-unicorn," it was the signal for "caution," and her express-tongue slackened accordingly; but when he said, "woman, be quiet," it was a warning to shut off steam immediately, or, at least, to shunt off upon a siding, and there confine herself to smashing coal-trucks and bullock-vans—in other words, to rebuke her servants, and not her husband.

"And where will you sleep to-night, young man?" inquired she, pointing to his knapsack: "it is rather late to be looking after lodgings in the town, I doubt."

A man of less conjugal experience than Mr. Tredgold would have here suggested that accommodation might have been given to the lad at once in the caravan itself, but that sagacious gentleman held his tongue, and left the proposal to the lady.

"It *is* late," replied Dick, "and if you would kindly permit me—"

"You *shall*," interrupted Mrs. Tredgold, with emphatic condescension, and not perhaps without a wish to be beforehand with her husband in the proffer of hospitality; "you shall lie in that corner yonder for to-night; but mind that you take off your boots, or else you'll scratch the boards."

This apprehension lest Dick should employ himself like the Cock-lane Ghost, arose from the fact that the floor, the walls, and indeed almost every article of furniture in the room, were of the most highly-polished mahogany, wherein Mrs. Tredgold took a great and not unreasonable pride. It was evidently a vast relief to her mind when Dick explained that the Lion Tamer of Central Africa had already offered him an asylum for that evening, if they would permit him to accept it; and when her husband asked the lad to remain and smoke a pipe with him before retiring to rest, she offered no objection, but withdrew graciously into her own apartment, like any Lucretia, Griselda, or other obedient consort of antiquity.

"She'll be listening," observed Mr. Tredgold to his guest in a muffled voice, "so you had better not say anything that's very particular, you know. And what about Trimming?" added he, aloud; "he was proprietor here when I was chief exhibitor; but he made a regular mess of the business."

Dick imparted what he knew concerning Mr. Jones's manner of life, as he had already done at the request of Tickerocandua.

"A clever fellow, and yet a fool," remarked Mr. Tredgold, by way of corollary, when he had finished. "He had a genius, too, after a certain fashion. He netted

upwards of four hundred pounds in one day by old Mossyface."

"A race-horse?" observed Dick, interrogatively.

"No, Sir, a lion. Many years ago, the elder Wombwell made a great deal of money by getting up a fight between dogs and lions, and Trimming resolved to do the same. There was a man named Jonathan, who had four couple of bull-dogs, which he offered to back against anything that could be brought against them, and a match was easily arranged between them and Mossyface. We dared not advertise, as Wombwell did of old, in the papers, but we sent out notices to all the sporting nobility and moneyed swells who were in the neighbourhood, and put the tickets up at two guineas a head. The match itself was for five hundred pounds, and the betting, which was in favour of the dogs, was something tremendous. The fight lasted three-quarters of an hour, at the expiration of which, there being only four dogs able to hold on (the rest having been wiped out by the paws of Mossyface), Jonathan cried out: "I have lost, but spare my bull-dogs." Had the dogs got the better, it was arranged beforehand that the exclamation should have been: "I have lost, but spare my lion;" for, indeed, both dogs and lion were Trimming's own property, while Jonathan was no other than our present animated lecturer, Mr. Mopes, who will tell you all about it. It was a fine conception of Trimming's; but when the matter of the double ownership got to be known, it is said to have given some dissatisfaction."

"He seemed to me to be a high-spirited, good-tempered fellow," remarked Dick, apologetically.

"Very much so," remarked Mr. Tredgold drily; "very much so indeed, so long as he was pleased; but when otherwise, he was rather the reverse. I give you my

word of honour, that he was once upon the point of committing a cold-blooded and atrocious murder upon the very person who is now addressing you. Because I refused to approach within a dangerous proximity of the animals in the course of my interesting lectures, he chose to be disappointed and offended: and on one occasion, being inflamed with liquor, absolutely shut me up for forty minutes in company with the emu. I was in the same cage with that formidable bird, Sir, during the whole of that period—which seemed to me to extend over several weeks—while Mr. Trimming and a brutal confederate (dismissed, I need not say, within the same hour in which the establishment passed into my hands) sat cross-legged outside the bars, enjoying the horrors of my situation. The emu, you may not be aware, is almost as big as an ostrich, and has a particularly sharp beak. I have got impressions of it on more than one portion of my person at this moment, and shall probably carry them to my grave. No, Mr. Trimming's temper was by no means always equable. How does he behave," added Mr. Tredgold, sinking his voice to a whisper, "to the young woman? How does he treat poor Lucidora?"

"Pretty well," replied Dick, sorrowfully; "almost always very well; but not quite always."

"Drinks, eh?" interrogated the other. "Ah, poor girl, if she had only known what was best for her and who could have ——"

"You are keeping me awake with your chattering," exclaimed the shrill-toned voice of Mrs. Tredgold through the panel, and her husband shuddered at it like a guilty ghost at cockcrow; "it is high time, young man, that you took yourself off next door. We keep early hours here, Sir, night and morning, and Mr. Bairman will be glad of your assistance between six and seven."

“Ten shillings a week, then, and your keep,” observed Mr. Tredgold audibly, and as though he were concluding some foregoing conversation ; “and lodgings you must of course find in future where you can.”

The conditions of the bargain thus concluded were not very advantageous, nor was the nature of the service he had engaged to perform by any means attractive ; but the frankness with which he had been treated by his new master was refreshing to Dick after the solemn reticence of the Darkendim Street government, and the companionship of Tickerocandua promised to be congenial and interesting to him in a very high degree.

That redoubtable hunter had fallen into so sound a slumber, that all the lad’s efforts to induce him to open the door were fruitless ; and he was at last admitted by the Earthman in a costume scantier still than that in which he was wont to appear in public, and with a bundle of flint-headed arrows in his hand, wherewith he unmistakably threatened our hero with instant death, in spite of many “How-do-you-dos” and “Thank-you-Sirs,” delivered with even more than customary enthusiasm.





CHAPTER XXV

A LODGING WITH A LIONESS.

AS the full colonel of a regiment takes his ease and his annual stipend, leaving the conduct of affairs in the hands of his lieutenant-colonel ; or as the head of a firm holds himself aloof from the working members, and lets his junior partners perform the duties of the concern, while he himself leans rather towards the privileges ; so did the first butcher of the establishment of Tredgold, late Trimming, depute most of the cares of his office to his newly-appointed assistant.

One especial duty, however, did Mr. Bairman reserve to himself—namely, that of putting his four-footed victims to death with his own hands. Many men have a passion for slaughter by means of rifles and fowling-pieces, but Mr. Bairman was enamoured of the pole-axe. As long as he had health and strength to wield that weapon, observed he, in something of a devotional and submissive tone, he would continue to do so, as he had done for thirty years or so ; if ever he should find himself unequal to the task of finishing off any animal doomed for sacrifice, he was ready, from that moment, to put aside his sacrificial garment (blue) and the sacred axe ; but in the meantime, he would exercise his gift so long as it was intrusted to him. It was a strange and not very pleasing fancy, but Mr. Bairman was himself a strange and by no

means very pleasing man. His face was as deadly white as that of the most aristocratic daughter of fashion, so that it seemed as though he had spilled something of his own vital fluid with every act of bloodshed, while a cataract of sandy-coloured beard depended from it, whereon he was wont to wipe his gory hands—a habit which, even under less unpleasant circumstances, is justly reprobated in the best circles. Mr. Bairman was not of that social disposition which generally characterised the company whereto he had the honour to belong ; but if it had been otherwise, he would have had little opportunity for the display of geniality ; they shrank from his society and conversation in rather a remarkable manner, considering that their own callings were, for the most part, the reverse of delicate, and demanded some strength of nerves. This gentleman was good enough to afford what he designated as a splendid spectacle to Dick upon the very first morning of his apprenticeship, in the slaying of an aged and decrepit horse. The fact of the poor animal's being blind did away with that necessity for fineness of treatment, upon which the artist particularly prided himself ; but even as it was, the spectator was so perfectly satisfied, that nothing could ever induce him to behold a repetition of such a performance. He would work with the barrow and the fork in the distribution of food to the wild animals, as in duty bound, but he would be witness to no more butcheries. Mr. Bairman was hugely tickled by this determination of his young ally, which he declared to have been his own when he first took to the business, and assured him that within a week or so he would come to feel quite differently. In the meantime, however, Dick's breakfast was utterly spoiled, and the ardour with which he had regarded his new mode of life a good deal damped.

“Never you mind *him*,” remarked Tickerocandua, to whose ear the lad confided his sentiments respecting his immediate chief; “he’s a fine fellow in the shambles among tottering animals—a deuce of a fellow, as the saying is, among eggs with a stick—but put him in front of a little bit of a cat like the puma, and I believe, if he had a whole sheaf of pole-axes, he would not dare to strike a blow to save his life. Why, when I wanted to give Regulus his castor-oil the other day, poor fellow—that’s the African lion, you know—and asked Bairman to lend me a hand, he made as much of it as though I had been going to administer *him*. The way is, you know, we tie his two fore-paws together and bring him to the front of the cage; and then we get his mouth open, and put the oil down as easy as though he were a baby; yet, if you believe me, that fellow trembled so that he spilt half the bottle. He don’t love me, I know, because I called him a funker; not as I think it any blame to one as hasn’t pluck to be unable to show it, only then he shouldn’t go bragging about what he can do, and laughing at other people who aint so fond of bloodletting. Nothing would give old Bairman greater pleasure than to see me eaten up alive, I know. Now, Mr. Tredgold is quite as much afraid of the beastesses as he is; but then he’s as tender-hearted as a chicken about others, too.”

Thus discoursed Tickerocandua, perched beside our hero on the lofty seat of the lion’s caravan, and driving four horses in hand, which it was his pleasure rather than his duty to do; for the hunter was especially excused from all the fatigues and duties of travel to which the rest of the company, without exception, were liable. Every other person was expected to make himself useful on the march, whether in running beside the leaders of the team

of eight cream-coloured horses, which drew their band triumphantly through the towns, or in stopping the wheels of the giraffe-waggon as it toiled laboriously up the hills. There was no occasion to perform this office to the elephant's chariot, insomuch as, like the Irish gentleman in the sedan-chair with the bottom out, that noble animal might, but for the look of the thing, have dispensed with his vehicle altogether ; since while seeming to be drawn he really drew, as the more sagacious observers would sometimes discover, by catching sight of his feet underneath among the wheels.

The procession commonly started on its journeys very early, as soon as those creatures were fed whose turn it was to feed upon the morning in question, and travelled very slowly. When they reached their destination, there was the show to be made ready—a work of several hours—so as to be open to the public, if possible, on that same evening ; and then there were divers wants of the beasts to be attended to before bed could be thought of for the human. Dick led no very easy life of it in Tredgold's late Trimming's establishment, it is certain ; and if he had exchanged the China-trade for Lion-feeding, with the expectation of finding greater ease and leisure, he had made a mistake. Sunday was a day of rest to him which he had never before known how to properly appreciate, and we may be sure that he would not have spent one now, by way of holiday, in the Zoological Gardens. Nevertheless, except for the unpleasant character of his particular occupation, the young man was not dissatisfied with his mode of life, nor did he contemplate leaving it unless Mr. Bairman's sinews should fail him, and the office of slaughterer devolve upon his own unambitious hands. Dick was a favourite among the whole company, except with the first Butcher, who was

not in the habit of making favourites of anybody : even Mrs. Tredgold gradually forgot the lad had been once the *protégé* of so despicable a young person as Lucidora, and on one occasion of indisposition, even made him a motherly present of a couple of family-pills. Mr. Tredgold was highly satisfied with him, and would consult him upon what was good for this or that of the larger animals, if Tickerocandua did not chance to be at hand. From the Beast-tamer, indeed, Dick soon learned all that that gentleman had to teach, as well as experiencing many practical kindnesses at his hands ; among which was this, that the whole expense and trouble of procuring lodgings was saved to him by being permitted to take up his permanent quarters in the Lion-hunter's house on wheels.

On a certain dreadful winter's night, when the entire establishment was snowed up on a Yorkshire moor, and both domestic caravans were hospitably shared with the whole shivering company, Tickerocandua announced his intention of giving more room to others by making his own couch in the apartment of one of the lionesses, who had lately presented the proprietary with a couple of cubs. "You may come too, if you like, Arbour," said he, half in jest and half in earnest ; and Dick answered on the instant, "I will—" although he felt some undeniable qualms of terror as soon as the words had escaped his lips.

"You take your loaded whip, Robinson, I see, notwithstanding that you have not the slightest fear!" sneered Mr. Bairman.

"Yes," returned the Lion-tamer angrily, "but it is because I am answerable for the life of the lad."

"Ah, to be sure," returned the other, "the young man has not your determination of character ; that is true."

"I beg of you, my good friend," observed Dick, blushing, "that you will use no extra precaution on my account; I shall feel quite safe with *you*, without your whip."

There was a murmur of approbation among the company as Tickerocandua put the weapon aside, with "That's my brave boy, Dick; *you* would not dare to come, Butcher, though I took twenty whips."

This statement being quite incontrovertible, Mr. Bairman gave only a ghastly grin by way of reply, and the Beast-tamer, turning his back upon him contemptuously, bade Dick put on his great-coat and bring a railway-rug. "The old lady herself will keep *me* warm enough," said he; "but you must lie in the far-corner, as she may not take kindly to a stranger. You may talk in her company as much as you like, but you must not sneeze, or make any unusual sound, for her ears are easily offended."

The establishment of Tredgold late Trimming, as the two friends beheld it on that wintry midnight, presented a singular spectacle. A long line of vehicles, as huge as were ever seen—built for the accommodation of beast—since the Ark itself, cast their gigantic shadows upon the waste of snow; motionless under the cold clear moon they stood, like some embodiment of weird romance, disproportioned, unnatural, and such as might be begotten in the dreaming brain through reading Mr. Edgar Poe's works, and after partaking of pork-chops for supper. The poor horses, released from the shafts as soon as locomotion became impossible, and huddled together in a circle that had with difficulty been cleared from snow for their accommodation, resembled some troop of phantom steeds in a spectral circus. The wintry blast that swept the moor was laden with sounds such as it had probably never

borne before—the muffled outcries of wild beasts from every quarter of the globe, astonished at the novelty of their situation, and wondering why the show was not set up as usual, and the public eye riveted upon them with its customary admiration. This melancholy scene would doubtless have had a greater effect upon Dick, just issued from the warm and crowded caravan, had not his mind been so engrossed by the gravity of the coming adventure. He heartily repented of that foolhardiness which had prompted him to accompany his friend in taking up such dangerous quarters, although the fear of man was so far stronger than that of beast, that he dared not now for shame shrink back from the undertaking.

“There is really not the slightest danger,” remarked Tickerocandua, reading perhaps his thoughts, “if you are but pretty still. Only, in case of accident, be guided entirely by what I shall tell you.”

With these words the beast-tamer undid one of the wooden shutters that was fastened immediately over the cage-door of the lioness, and without a moment of hesitation ascended by a little portable ladder into the den. Dick’s heart beat loud and quick as he followed his leader, and almost leaped into his mouth as the animal gave a tremendous growl upon his unexpected appearance.

“Never mind her growling,” remarked Tickerocandua coolly; “when the creeturs growl it’s safe enough, but when they walk round and round you, friendly-like, and show their teeth without any noise, it is better to be upon the safe side of the bars. The tiger, indeed, will fawn upon you the very moment before he bites your head off. Poor old gal!” continued he, approaching the majestic female, and patting her on the head, “your cubs are in

perfect safety, I assure you ; they are being kept warm by your master's fire, while Mr. Tredgold, who will on no account keep company with them, is banished into the bed-room. There is a young gentleman come to see you, but he isn't good to eat, so you need not stretch your mouth so wide in that direction. Make yourself comfortable yonder, Dick ; I shall lay my head here, upon my lady's hind-quarters, so that if she gets up, I shall be the first to know it."

Whether Dick succeeded in making himself quite comfortable, is more than doubtful ; but he rolled himself up submissively enough, and was silent. "I will try," said he to himself, "*not* to think of that confounded lioness, with all my might ;" but he was quite unable to keep *her* might out of his thoughts for all that. He fell a wondering whether she would eat the railway-rug first, and him afterwards, or swallow the whole bundle as the elephant did his oranges, without troubling himself to take off the peel ; and entertained a number of other ridiculous suppositions, which, however, were not the least less fearful because they were absurd. At last, not being able to bear longer this lying awake with eyes and ears at stretch, in silence and in darkness (for the shutter had been pulled to as soon as they were within-side), he suddenly demanded of Tickerocandua whether they were likely to have more snow on the morrow or not ?

The beast-tamer burst into a little roar at this, and the lioness into a great one ; so that it was some time before Dick could get an answer to his important question.

"I do not know, I am sure, my lad ; but I know this, that you were not thinking very much of the weather, when you asked about it."

“No,” replied Dick frankly, “I was thinking of that infernal animal ; I can’t get to sleep, and I shall go crazy unless you talk to me.”

“Poor lad !” exclaimed Tickerocandua pityingly, “it was wrong of me to place you in such a situation ; I will get up and let you out.”

“No,” replied Dick firmly, “I will stay here whatever comes of it, and no matter how much I fear.”

“Bravo,” returned the beast-tamer ; “that is to have far greater courage than not to fear at all. The old lady here, however, will never hurt us ; although I own that now, when she has just had her cubs taken from her, I would not like to have her flying over me, as the others do, half-a-dozen times a day.”

“How is it, by-the-bye, that your face is often bleeding when you come out from that ?” asked Dick.

“They all snap at me as they leave my shoulder,” returned Tickerocandua ; “and sometimes a tooth will graze the flesh for all that I can do. That’s nothing compared with the labour of shifting them away, so that they should not rest upon me more than momentarily ; if they leaped off less slowly, I should sink under their weight, even though their claws did not do for me.”

“But does not the sight or taste of your blood make them dangerous ?” demanded Dick. “I have always understood that that would set even the best tamed of wild animals beyond control.”

“That is not so with *human* blood,” replied Tickerocandua ; “because with the exception of the Bengal tiger yonder, our friends do not know how good it is ; but if you came in from the slaughter-house—— Hush ! what is that moving about outside the caravan ? The old lady is getting uneasy. Great Heaven !” ejaculated the beast-tamer as the shutter was suddenly thrown

back by an unseen hand, and a stick drawn rapidly across the bars of the cage-door, “somebody wishes to murder us !”

A stifled roar burst forth from the lioness, making the lad’s blood run cold, and the hair to rise upon his head, as if under the influence of the electric wheel. He felt that roar to be his death-knell ; a prayer passed through his mind, which he had neither time nor power to utter ; and before his eyes a glimpse of that dead mother’s face, which he was perhaps about to see again, and for ever ; and then the voice of Tickerocandua smote upon his ear, awaking him once more to life and action. It was not the beast-tamer’s ordinary tone, but the suppressed utterance of one engaged in some tremendous physical struggle who has no breath to lose. “Rush to the door ; undo the bolt, lad ; that is the only way that our lives can now be saved !”

Dick had his fingers on the fastening before Tickerocandua had finished his sentence ; as the iron bars swung swiftly back, there was a hurtling noise in the air behind him ; and as he leaped, a flying body came with tremendous force upon his back, and rolled with him over and over out of the cage.

This was Tickerocandua, who had been sitting upon the head of the lioness until ejected from the position in that undignified manner. Dick and he would not have been safe yet, but that the enraged animal, in her furious spring after them, had well-nigh stunned herself by coming in contact with the iron-sheathed wall of the cage. Before she could perceive that the path of liberty lay open to her, the beast-tamer had leaped up and closed it, whereupon the creature set up such a roar of baffled rage as brought half the company out of their sleeping places, despite the bitterness of the night.

“Thank Heaven, you are safe!” cried they, when they beheld the two friends standing on the right side of the bars; “we feared that Dido had devoured you. What on earth have you done to enrage her?”

Tickerocandua, whose colour had entirely left his cheeks, answered not a word. “Fetch my whip, Dick—do not lose one moment!” cried he.

“You surely are not going to venture,” began the lad; but the expression of the beast-tamer’s countenance became so terrible, that he interrupted himself in the middle of his expostulation, and ran for the weapon without another word.

The lioness, with open mouth, was thrusting her fore-claws through the bars, as though she would have torn his heart out, when Tickerocandua re-entered the cage, closing the gate behind him. She turned round with a short snarl, and sprang right at him, while the spectators shuddered at the horror which seemed inevitable; but the man lightly stepped aside, and bringing the butt-end of his weapon down upon her with no great force as it seemed, the mighty beast, so instinct with strength and fury, lay in a moment motionless upon the floor of the den. He waited, with his foot upon her neck, till she recovered herself, when he beat her with the thong severely upon the back and legs; after which he stepped out of the cage with great deliberation, observing to Dick that he was sorry to have had to punish the old lady, but that if he had suffered her to imagine herself his conqueror, even for an hour, his life would have been sacrificed on the next occasion that he entered the den.

“There is one, however,” added the Beast-tamer, suddenly seizing upon Mr. Bairman, who had been looking on with a very chagrined expression of countenance, “to

whom both you and I, Dick, owe a debt which I have much pleasure in settling." And with that, before any one could interpose, he had administered a dozen cuts of the whip across the face of the first butcher, whereby that malignant disturber of the sleeping lioness and her lodgers was marked like the zebra of the desert for months to come.





CHAPTER XXVI.

A MAN OF BUSINESS AND PLEASURE.

Twas a singular proof of the tenacity with which the human, however fallen, will still cling to the skirts of respectability, that Mr. Richard Arbour did not inform his friends, throughout this period, of the precise nature of his employment in Mr. Tredgold's establishment. He was gaining an honest living by purveying their necessary aliment to God's creatures, and yet he was ashamed of it. If he had been butchering the same for his own pleasure, with the latest description of fowling-piece, he would have written of his occupation not without a glow of personal vanity, but as it was he "sank" the slaughter-house, and I am afraid rather led Miss Lucy Mickleham to understand that he was permanently engaged, under the indirect patronage of royalty (and indeed V.R. always headed Mr. Tredgold's posters) in certain scientific experiments in Natural History. Even Sister Maggie was cognizant of no more than that the outcast was bread-winning in some humble capacity connected with the animal world, and that being likely to better himself, he did not care to mention more particularly what his occupation was. Mr. William Mickleham, while playfully announcing his belief that the family scapegrace was parading the south

of England with a bear and a monkey, and would some day present himself at their gate to the sound of a tambourine or hand-organ, was quite unaware that in so saying he was in reality rather overestimating his young friend's social position. Nevertheless, these three held many a council concerning the absent lad and his prospects ; Lucy and Maggie, because they loved him ; and William, because, as the scaffolding whereby an attachment (fast rising to the story of affection) had been built up between himself and Maggie, he owed him no little gratitude.

That Kensington cottage was indeed a holiday-house to the poor young lady, escaped for a while from the grim mansion in Golden Square, and the companionship of Adolphus and Maria, who, had they dared, would have treated her no better than Cinderella.

Uncle Ingram, however, did not lose his affection for her, and strove, as it seemed, to make amends for the future wrong that he contemplated by present indulgence. He took her into his confidence—which was, however, only a sort of mental counting-house, wherein he kept his business-speculations—and threw open for her all the chambers of his heart ; all, that is, save one—the Bluebeard Chamber, which it was forbidden for any to glance at, wherein he nursed his wrath and kept it warm against Nephew Dick. Perhaps the sense of justice, which was really strong within the old man, and could, now and then, even overcome a prejudice, reproached him with his hardness towards the boy—whom he always pictured to himself *as a boy*, impatient of control, and obstinate under punishment—and made the subject more hateful to him than it would else have been. At all events Maria could change her uncle's mood of doting fondness for her sister at any time, to

one of anxiety and suspicion, by dropping a casual word which should remind him of the intimacy, still unbroken, between Maggie and Dick. Mr. Ingram Arbour's memory was waning upon many points but not upon this. He forgot some matters which had formerly been at least as familiar to him as his prayers ; his judgment upon matters of business, in former days so uniformly clear and decisive, was now apt to vacillate ; but he always remembered that there was one Dick Arbour who had turned out a disgrace to the family, and never wavered in his determination to separate it from him, and him from it. The diligence and activity manifested by Adolphus in Darkendim Street, and the good reports of Lawyer Johnnie's assiduity in the country, contrasted strongly with the misconduct of their younger brother ; he of course looked all the blacker by contrast ; and it is possible that these whitened sepulchres, on their parts, received an additional coat of purity by the comparison. It may have been the absence of that foil, perhaps, which prevented Adolphus from appearing so excellent a man of business in the eyes of Mr. Mickleham as in those of his uncle. To the sagacious managing-clerk, it was evident that the steady but successful course pursued by the head of the firm for so many years was little relished by the junior partner ; and that though cautious and prudent enough by nature the young man beheld with impatience the many chances of great gains which spring up in the path of every important commercial house, rejected for the comparatively insignificant profits of mere legitimate trading. This was especially apparent since the return of Mr. Adolphus Arbour from a late business expedition to Paris, where he had picked up and brought back with him certain brittle opinions concerning the extension of the china trade, as

well as a personal friend in one Mr. Frederick Charlecot, who abetted him in the same.

This gentleman, who had laid him under some chance obligations at a *café*, by becoming his successful interpreter in a squabble with the waiter respecting his bill, was not himself a man of business. On that first occasion of their acquaintance, and while sipping the Johannisburg, which he had politely invited Adolphus to share with him, he had confessed, with regret, that his means having always been sufficient for his moderate wants, he had never embarked in any of those streams of enterprise which were the boast and life-blood of their common country. "They interest me, they have a charm and an attraction for my intellect, such as it is," observed he, "but I have never been practically concerned with them. I have made other men's fortunes more than once, by suggesting this and that line of conduct, which recommended itself to my theoretic commercial judgment; it was doubtless assisted by that combination of chances which enters more or less into every speculation, but my friends were as grateful as though I had been their guardian angel throughout. I have felt, however, little ambition to incur the trouble and necessity of making money for myself. I am an idle dog, you see. I smoke —and if you care for cigars, I think you will like this Cabana as well as any you will meet with in Paris. I drink, although never to excess, for that would interfere with my intellectual pleasures, as well as disorganise my digestion; and I make friendships where I find any sensible long-headed fellow like yourself, who is also a gentleman. My family is what would, I believe, be considered 'good,' even by the most exclusive; but through a too long residence in the everlasting atmosphere of Parisian saloons, they have become un-English, and too

frivolous even for me. We often quarrel—my family and myself—concerning our Nation of Shopkeepers. They accuse me of being a democrat and a *sans culotte*, because I affirm that a merchant-prince is as good as a prince who is not a merchant. They would consider you, Sir, if, as your name suggests, you are a connection of the great house of Arbour—in the light of a—upon my soul they would—of a mere tradesman !”

Mr. Adolphus Arbour visibly blushed, though he replied with no little testiness : “ And why not, Sir ? Why in the world not, Sir, I would like to know !”

“ Exactly,” rejoined the exquisite, lighting a fresh Cabana ; “ you have hit the very gist of the whole question. Why *not* you should like to know ? You don’t deny it. Why *should* you ? You are proud of it. You ask if my family are any better for not having their hands sullied—their very expression only the other day—their hands sullied by trade for the last three hundred years ; and I answer you upon the honour of a Charlecot, that they are *not* the better. All that I demand is, that commerce and good manners should go hand in hand. I should not, I confess (so deep are the prejudices of birth), I should not have been thus intimate with you, Mr. Arbour, had I not perceived that your commercial prosperity had been secured without the loss of an elegant refinement—if, in a word, you had fallen short of the perfect and polished gentleman.”

The insolent condescension of this address would have been mitigated to some persons by the simplicity and evident absence of a wish to offend, with which it was uttered ; it was redeemed in the eyes of Adolphus Arbour by the air and tone of the speaker, instinct with that easy assurance which only belongs to those who are set above the necessity of ingratiating themselves with

their fellow-creatures, and by the fashionable and even splendid attire in which the descendant of the Charlecots was clothed. Lounging in this or that unstudied, but never ungraceful attitude, the stranger looked indeed like one who sits above the thunder of this work-a-day world, and who only mixes with it from motives of curiosity or amusement. Mr. Charlecot's expressed admiration of men of his companion's class was reciprocated by his new acquaintance, who, like many of his own order, revered none so much as those who themselves have neither need nor wish to work. A second bottle of Johannisburg was disposed of during a conversation in which his new friend astonished him beyond measure with his acquaintance with the details of the China trade, surpassing even as a matter of special knowledge, but perfectly wonderful, since forming only a branch of that information which Mr. Frederick Charlecot professed to possess concerning all the various channels of British industry.

“ You, Mr. Arbour, have one of those practical minds that I respect and admire above everything, and which are worth all the learning and knowledge in the world. I have unhappily done nothing—had nothing to do—save reading and thinking ; dreaming perhaps of undertakings promising enough indeed, but to which I was in no position to give effect ; teasing myself with far-off visions of splendid successes, whose reality will be one day grasped by a less idle hand.” At these words, delivered very differently from his ordinary unenthusiastic and indolent tone, Mr. Charlecot extended visibly a set of ladylike fingers glittering with gold and gems. “ You are laughing at me, Arbour ; you think me a fool, I know —you practical men are such sceptics—but, upon my honour, I have such a bent for commerce, that I some-

times think there must be a bar-sinister somewhere interposing itself between me and the Charlecots. Here, waiter, is the money, and half a franc for your own pocket, but not a centime more. Any other member of my family would have given the man a whole one, but one of my peculiarities, is the most rigorous economy in matters of social expenditure. I enjoy myself, but do not pay a farthing more than it is necessary for a gentleman to do : while in my accounts with my tradesmen, I am even still more exact and particular. Man of pleasure that I unfortunately am, I am in my small way a man of business also. Our road, I see, lies together, Sir, although not for very far, I fear."

Mr. Charlecot paused opposite an imposing mansion which has the credit of being the most splendidly appointed, as also the most expensive, in all Paris. "We lodge here," said he. "Is it possible that it fortunately happens that you are staying at the Hotel Gilbert also ? Madame and I have rooms above the *entresol*."

"Yes," replied Adolphus hesitatingly, "I do lodge here ; but I am only come for a few days, you see. My room is a great deal higher up. Indeed, I thought the price of the first floors enormous."

"Now, I like that," replied Mr. Charlecot admiringly ; "I do like that. You merchant-princes, who roll in wealth, are so eccentric about your expenditure. The Berlin Rothschild assured me himself, that he never put his foot in a cab except at a friend's expense. What is twenty guineas a week to a man who turns a million——?"

"My dear Sir," interrupted Adolphus with a gratified blush, "we do nothing of that kind, I do assure you. We have, it is true, the use of a few thousands "

Mr. Frederick Charlecot leaned up against one of the

marble pillars of the entrance-hall, and indulged in what, for a person of his distinguished quality, was uproarious mirth. “Now I do like that now—that notion of a few thousands in connection with Arbour and Nephew ! To underrate the gigantic character of your undertakings is *so* characteristic. The use of a few thousands ! that is capital. I shall remember that for Tuffner—you know Tuffner, the Stock Exchange millionaire, of course you do ?—that, and your room at the top of the house, are both excellent.”

“But you know,” replied Adolphus, who had begun to be not a little ashamed of being thought parsimonious, although a few hours previously he had been reproaching himself with living at the Hotel Gilbert at all, and wondering what the Head of the Firm would say to the bill —“but you know I am a bachelor ; I am not a married man like you.”

“A married man !” replied Mr. Charlecot in an offended tone ; “why what on earth led you to suppose that I was a married man ? Now, really, my dear Arbour, you have no sort of right to be so hard upon a fellow. I am not so young as I have been, I know : not so lively, brilliant, rattling a Don Juan as yourself ; but, oh ladies of Paris, I appeal with confidence to you against this accusation ! *Do* I, *do* I look like a married man ? a Paterfamilias ? Heavens ! an elderly person who pays ready-money for flannel and children’s shoes.”

“I beg your pardon,” replied Adolphus clumsily ; “only I thought you said something about Madame.”

Again Mr. Charlecot laughed, but this time like the tinkling of any silver bell. “Good again, Arbour ; upon my life you are *very* good. That pretence of respectability is perfect, and *so* characteristic. For my part, when in France I do as the French do, and in Paris, you know,

one marries without benefit of clergy. Does Madame receive?" asked the speaker of a female domestic on her way to the first floor.

"She does, Sir; I go for chocolate," returned the servant.

"For three, then," replied Mr. Charlecot. "You will take a cup with us, Arbour, in a friendly way, and have a chat with Madame?"

The apartment in which Mr. Adolphus Arbour found himself the next moment, was by far the most splendid in which he had ever set foot; French magnificence had outdone itself in the profusion of gilding, the immensity of the mirrors, and the gorgeous elegance of the draperies. The most beautiful flowers sent forth their fragrant perfumes from cornucopias of crystal and silver, while from without, the summer air came softly over banks of flowers in the balcony. In the centre of the shaded room was a fountain of alabaster, which diffused along with its pleasant music a sense of coolness inexpressibly refreshing to eyes just released from the heat and glare of a Parisian pavement. A piano stood in one corner of the saloon, with an open music-book spread out before it, while volumes of engravings, splendidly bound, lay on the tables along with the most recent of those French and English newspapers which principally record the transactions of commerce.

A desk stood near the window with drawing materials, and a half-finished sketch upon it, and a moderate-sized circulating library lay strewed, half on the ottoman half on the floor, as though some literary epicure had been recently satiating himself, or herself, upon the tit-bits of fiction to repletion. The whole aspect of the room proclaimed a matter-of-course and every-day luxury, which is unusual indeed in hotel drawing-rooms

inhabited by English persons, except they be of very considerable wealth and position. Even our richer fellow-countrymen can rarely bring themselves to look upon hotels as their temporary houses, and are commonly, while resident within them, content to debar themselves from many of their ordinary comforts, from a perhaps somewhat fanciful notion of economy. If Uncle Ingram, for instance, had been so imprudent as to have taken up his quarters at the Hotel Gilbert—which his nephew did more for the sake of giving it as his address, and of consorting with fashionable company in its coffee-room, than because it suited with his habits—he would have certainly dispensed with his ordinary luncheons, or have gone out in the broiling sun for a biscuit, rather than have summoned one of its magnificent waiters and taken his midday meal off silver and damask. Mr. Adolphus Arbour had an intellect keenly alive to these differences of social expenditure, and the air of his new friend's gorgeous dwelling-place filled his British soul with a reverent and sublime respect. If Mr. Charlecot's victory over him seems to have been somewhat rapidly attained, it must be remembered that his movements were masterly, and his masses—considering the weak nature of the opponent he had to deal with, overwhelming. He also began the contest on advantageous ground, and with the sun at his back. The being able, when among foreigners, to speak fluently in their tongue, which your compatriot cannot use, is to possess a superiority over him, quite inconceivable to one whose sober wishes have never led him to stray beyond his native land. The insolence so complained of in the manner of Englishmen abroad is, I believe, mainly attributable to their almost universal ignorance of any other language than their own. They travel more

than other nations do, and with far fewer polyglottic accomplishments. How can they, then, fail to look stolid, and sulky, and discontented, when they cannot even ask for beer or complain of its absence so as to be understood ; when people with bayonets jabber at them civilities which sound to their ears like threats ; and when the whole continent of Europe seems to be inhabited by an idle and perverse population, who will not take the trouble to acquire even the rudiments of the English tongue ? Then in periods of misgiving and pecuniary disputation—when we do not even comprehend the value of the coins we are disputing about—how pleasant is it to hear one speaking our mother-tongue in the strange land, and proffering the courteous offer of standing between us and the native extortioner. Thus it was that the butterfly, Mr. Frederick Charlecot, obtained his first hold of the money-spinner, Mr. Adolphus Arbour ; and having that hold, he was not the man to let go again.

Of all the attractive objects with which that drawing-room in the Hotel Gilbert gleamed, Madame was the crown. Mr. Arbour's limited experience had led him to expect, in a lady of such a more than doubtful social position, a coarse, however comely exterior, and a manner familiar and unrefined. Madame, on the contrary, could scarcely be called beautiful ; but her air and manner were elegant and distinguished in a very high degree. An aristocratic languor seemed to pervade her limbs, and give a pathos to her tones ; while her conversation had that naturalness which only belongs to the very best society, and to people who are not in society at all. The latest queen of London fashion is said to have been seen sucking a chicken-bone, at a semi-royal supper party, without the medium of a fork—an undeniably advantageous method of eating it, but one which you, fair reader,

who are doubtless fashionable also, would rather die than adopt. She was famous, however, for a certain *persiflage* that occasionally culminated to coarseness. Madame, too, had a lively fancy, and was sometimes a little rude. She did not rise from her couch by the open window when the two gentlemen came in, but remained there with a book in her hand, sometimes reading it, and sometimes joining in the conversation.

“I am glad to see you, Sir,” said she with a gracious smile, as Mr. Arbour was introduced; “I like to see an English face, and to hear the English tongue. Be so good as to eschew French while in my company.”

“I shall have the greatest pleasure in so doing,” returned Adolphus; “the fact is, your—that is to say, I have even now been indebted to Mr. Charlecot for getting me out of a difficulty caused by my indifferent knowledge of the language.”

“I dare say you speak it vilely: all Englishmen do.” As if to show, at the same time, that this was not the case with Englishwomen, she rapidly uttered a few French words to Mr. Charlecot in what seemed to Mr. Arbour’s ears the purest Parisian accent—but, then, he was not a very good judge.

“Madame acquaints me that there is a letter of importance awaiting me; be so kind, Mr. Arbour, as to excuse me a moment while I look at it. I make no scruple, you see, of sacrificing the demands of hospitality itself to those of business.”

An open door at the end of the apartment disclosed a smaller room with a dining-table; a massive *escritoire*, contrasting by its plainness with the neighbouring splendours of a sumptuously appointed sideboard, stood in a corner, covered with papers, and before these Mr. Charlecot sat himself down.

Madame conducted a languid conversation with the visitor, returning the homage of his eyes with looks of courteous forbearance, as though she would say: "You are dull, Sir; but observe, I do not yawn." But when his gaze wandered elsewhere, regarding him with an intensity of expression that by no means conveyed good wishes.

"You dine with the Emperor, I suppose," said she; "everybody does dine with him."

Mr. Adolphus Arbour was obliged to confess that, if that were indeed the case, he was but a nobody.

"Well, then, at the Embassy, at all events; it is there you have met Mr. Charlecot, I suppose."

Mr. Arbour replied that he had not met Mr. Charlecot there, but in a tone whereby he wished to imply that that was singular too, considering the frequency of his own invitations to the house of her Majesty's representative in Paris.

"You must have seen De Crespigny often there—the man whom the government have taken up so strangely in order to appease the Republicans. They say that there has been some sort of compromise effected, but that it will not last."

Mr. Adolphus Arbour had not had the happiness of meeting the Count de Crespigny, although he had often heard of him.

"That is singular, too: he spoke of you as if he knew you well. Did you not assist him once in some dangerous affair in London; but no, it must have been a younger man. Have you a Brother Richard?"

Adolphus felt himself growing scarlet under the eyes that were now fixed steadily enough, although with apparent indifference, upon him.

“It is a mistake, Madame; we have no Brother Richard.”

“Indeed! then I misunderstood the count,” returned the lady carelessly. “Have you not finished, Frederick, with those horrid papers yet?—you are always at business.”

“I have finished, Madame,” returned Charlecot, coming forward; “and the business has been a pleasure. Here is one of Tuffner’s funny letters again. Whenever I put him up to a good thing, Mr. Arbour—and he declares that my judgment is worth more than that of all the Bourse together—he always insists upon sending me what he calls ‘mental brokerage,’ payment for my raw material of advice. Here is his note for five thousand francs, you see; one per cent., I suppose, or so upon his gains on the whole transaction. A ridiculous bagatelle, of course, in the eyes of a man like you, but in my case very acceptable to defray any little extravagances. Do not take another cup of chocolate, but, if you have no better engagement, stay and sup with us *in* a friendly way. We have a *marchand dupé* for supper to-night, have we not, Madame?”

“I rather think we have,” replied the lady.





CHAPTER XXVII.

INTRIGUES AT THE COTTAGE.

THE acquaintance begun in the Hotel Gilbert between Mr. Charlecot and Adolphus soon ripened into intimacy ; and in less than three weeks from that date, the former had crossed the Channel, and was staying at Rose Cottage with the Arbours as a recognised friend of the family.

It may well be wondered at that Uncle Ingram should take to his fashionable guest so readily as did his nephew ; but nevertheless, within a day or two of Mr. Charlecot's arrival, that gentleman was almost as great a favourite with the head of the firm as with the junior partner. His manners, indeed, were a good deal toned down, and had no longer anything of the *roué* about them. Madame, with a dotation of ten thousand francs, had bidden him adieu for ever, and consented to remain in Paris, where lovers are not scarce. There was a sobriety in his voice and manner, when conversing upon commercial matters, which, contrasting with his habitual liveliness, gave increased weight and importance to what were in reality attractive and specious plans. The profuseness of his personal expenditure by no means detracted from his trustworthiness as a prudent adviser in the old merchant's eyes, who set it down to the habit of one who had always

enjoyed a superfluity of wealth, and in secret perhaps admired it accordingly.

Mr. John Arbour, who, like the astute Adolphus, had a relish for expensive amusements, combined with a disinclination to enjoy them at his own charges, esteemed the companionship of his new friend beyond everything, and left his own legal web-spinning to accompany him to London and elsewhere, whenever opportunity offered.

Above all, Miss Maria, whose personal charms were by no means enhanced by the revolving years, and who had begun to speak of matrimony as an indelicate institution, unadapted for persons of serious dispositions, set her cap, or rather put aside the cap which she had almost resolved to adopt, and set her slender tresses to entangle Mr. Frederick Charlecot. It was surprising how large-hearted and charitable she became in her judgment of moral delinquencies, when manifested in the person of the Beloved Object. It was scarcely to be denied that Mr. Frederick Charlecot was a worldly minded gentleman, with no particular "views" with regard to the wearing of the surplice, and other nice ecclesiastical questions. That tongue, so eloquent upon the commercial advantages that would flow from the introduction of highly ornamented earthenware spittoons among the Hottentots, was dumb upon any more decidedly religious missionary effort. To offer him an improving tract was only to facilitate his vicious habit of smoking by supplying him with a spill; while to take him to chapel was but to administer a soothing theological opiate, for no matter how "awakening" the sermon, Mr. Frederick Charlecot never failed to sleep through it all. The task of conversion which Miss Maria set herself, however, was not altogether without its fruits; she combined (as is not uncommon with that peculiar class of theologians to which she belonged)

spiritual endeavours with temporal—she preached to him and made love to him simultaneously—and one half of her labours at least was crowned with success. She used to take him out gudgeon-fishing in the punt—the same which had borne Dick, and Maggie, and his mother, up the river on the last day they spent together—and, anchored within view of the cottage, for propriety's sake, she would ply him alternately with sentiment and improving talk.

“I was more than pained, Mr. Charlecot, yesterday—I was terrified—to see you asleep while Mr. Stirren Warmleigh was expounding.”

“I had a heavenly vision, Miss Maria, nevertheless,” would reply the Incorrigible, “for I was dreaming of you.”

“Now, Mr. Frederick, if you go on in that light way, I shall leave the punt.”

“I think that would be dangerous, my dear young lady; the tide runs deep and strong; not but that you would fall a cheerful martyr to the maintenance of any good principle, I am well convinced.”

“You think too highly of me, dear Mr. Charlecot. I do humbly hope, however, that if a time of Popery and persecution should again arise, and the rack and the stake, and—and—”

“And the chop,” suggested Mr. Charlecot gravely. “My dear Miss Maria, how dreadful an image does that present to me: the keen and cruel axe; those raven tresses; that snowy neck; that palpitating——”

“Mr. Charlecot, I am astonished at you!”

“Pardon, fair lady, pardon; my imagination was indeed leading me too far.”

“Ah, how I wish you would be less volatile, Freder—Mr. Charlecot, I mean. You seem to fly from the contemplation of all serious subjects.”

"Do I seem, then, impatient of *your* society?" demanded the unabashed Frederick slyly.

"You are very wicked, Sir; and yet, somehow, I cannot reprove you as I would another. What is it, I wonder, that disarms my righteous indignation? What mysterious affinity can exist between us—children of two different worlds, as it were—that draws us thus together?"

"That's a bite," observed Mr. Charlecot interjectionally.

"A what, Sir?" exclaimed the nymph, in a tone somewhat sharper and shriller than the observation seemed to warrant.

"A gudgeon, my dear young lady—a gudgeon: did you not see your float bob? You are looking in the water at your own reflection, instead of attending to your line, and indeed I can hardly blame you. If I had not the original by my side to look at, I should be content to gaze for ever upon its pictorial representation myself."

"Be quiet, Freder—— Mr. Frederick. Take your arm away immediately; I insist upon it. They can see us from the cottage."

"Let us pitch the boat upon the other side of the island, then."

"We will do nothing of the kind, Sir; and, besides, there are always barges there. Why is Margaret sitting at that open window, I should like to know, staring out at us in that fashion? I think I had rather be put on shore."

"Perhaps she wishes to be here instead of you," replied Mr. Charlecot, smoothing his moustaches.

"You are a vain and naughty man," returned Miss Maria, reddening; "and I am sure that the child wishes nothing of the sort."

This was a most accurate assertion ; for Margaret was the only one of the Arbour household upon whom the late arrival had totally failed to make a favourable impression.

“Your uncle seems to be exceedingly fond of your sister,” remarked Mr. Charlecot carelessly.

“He is getting very old,” replied Maria spitefully ; “and when one is very old, one dotes.”

“Exactly so ; and yet the law seems to take but little cognizance of the fact. How often we see old persons willing away their entire property to one individual in no way more worthy than the remainder of their relatives, who are left, in consequence, quite insufficiently provided for.”

“That, however, will not happen in Margaret’s case,” returned her sister ; “she has—in consequence of certain circumstances—been excluded from all future share in my uncle’s property.”

“Poor girl !” remarked Mr. Frederick Charlecot, with as much astonishment and sympathy as a man could assume who was quite aware of the fact beforehand, and did not regret it. “And yet it is in just such a case as hers that one often finds the excommunicated person left a millionaire after all. The old gentleman repents at the last moment—thinks he’ll ‘hedge’ as regards the other world—forgives everybody, and leaves the object of his greatest indignation every farthing he has in the world.”

At this appalling picture of death-bed penitence, Miss Maria’s countenance fell from resignation to the calamities of others down to despair on one’s own account.

“Good Heavens ! Mr. Charlecot, you alarm me more than I can say ; not indeed with regard to the disposition

of my good uncle's property, when it shall please Providence to remove him from this sublunary scene, for riches are but vanity and a snare, and it is better far to be without them ; but lest ingratitude and disobedience should come to be rewarded instead of punished. If such a change should threaten the interests of morality, what course would you advise ? ”

“ A Deed of Gift, my dear young lady. Excuse my conciseness as a business man, when the moral circumstances of the case seem to demand dilation ; but if I were your Brother Adolphus I should put a limit to this doting fondness of your uncle while there is yet time. I should address him something in these terms : ‘ You are a most charming relative, and I have the highest confidence in your judgment and good sense ; but you are too tender-hearted ; that is your one weak point, my beloved uncle, and a very amiable weakness it is. You have announced your determination to leave your possessions to those who have shown themselves docile and obedient to your wishes, and they naturally look forward to it—not *as* money indeed, but as a better thing—as a mark of the esteem and regard from him who was so dear to them while in life. Now, they cannot conceal from themselves that that determination is wavering. You say it is not, my dear uncle : very good ; you think it is not, because you are unaware of the excessive amiability of your own nature. It is in your power, however, to prove whether you or they are right—to show the world that your judgment and moral sense are as keen as ever—by the execution of a Deed of Gift. By this means you can put it out of your own power ever to be cajoled by designing persons.’ ”

“ But to whom is my uncle to make over the money ? ” inquired Maria, with an anxiety singular enough in one

with whom the recipient could be only an object of pity as exposed to increased temptations.

“To Adolphus and yourself, for instance! or, if necessary, it may include your Brother John. But as your uncle will thus confide to your hands the entire management of his own property by the deed in question, he may well trust you to do all that is right and generous to others.”

“I think it would be better not to tell John anything about it,” observed Maria decisively; “it would only unsettle his mind, and prevent him attending to his profession.”

“My dear Miss Maria, I reverence you more than ever; you are, I perceive, a woman of business as well as of piety.”

“I am afraid not, Mr. Charlecot; it is not my wish, as it is not my gift, to meddle with such matters. I am of an unsuspecting disposition, and am of opinion that the direction of all money matters should be intrusted to brothers, husbands, and the like. I know nothing but the affairs of the house. I became a housekeeper at a very early age, and flatter myself I understand my duties in that way as well as any person.”

“There’s another nibble, Miss Maria; I saw it distinctly; he very nearly took the float under water. Throw in some more ground bait, and I think you will be almost certain to catch him the third time.”

These were the sort of conversations which took place often enough between Mr. Frederick Charlecot and his lover, but which we would not recommend as the basis of a serious flirtation for other young persons. He was well aware that the lady would become his wife for the asking, but he was by no means prepared to take her “for richer, for poorer,” but only “for richer.” If her inheritance

from her uncle could be secured in the manner suggested, the blood of the Charlecots might possibly consent to an alliance with trade; but in any other case he felt the sacrifice to be a little too "alarming." In the meantime, Mr. Frederick Charlecot found it difficult to suppress his sense of humour—by no means the proper element to be suffered to appear in a love passage, and pregnant with danger even to the most promising of suits. It is not pleasant to have one's sentiment made fun of under any circumstances, and least of all when one is an elderly lady taking aim with one's last arrow at the heart of a male.

We would not wrong Mr. Frederick Charlecot's reputation as a man of taste by letting it be supposed that he chose Miss Maria in preference to her Sister Margaret; or that conversations such as that which has been described were carried on with the former while any chance of securing the latter, upon equally favourable terms, remained. The probability of Mr. Ingram Arbour's altering his determination in favour of the younger niece had struck him long before he confided his suspicions to Maria, and had moved him in the first instance to try his fortune with her more comely sister. On the first opportunity of his finding himself alone with her, which did not happen very early during his stay at Rose Cottage, he took occasion to express with respect and delicacy his sorrow for the dissensions among that family by whom he had been so hospitably welcomed. "Do not imagine, Madam," added he, "that my intimacy with your Brother Adolphus misleads me as to who is to be blamed for this."

"I am not aware, Sir," responded Margaret with quiet dignity, "that the intimacy you speak of is either so deep or so long-founded as to justify such an

interest as you speak of, and least of all as regards myself."

"If my behaviour, Madam, has led you to imagine that my sympathies are enlisted upon any side save your own, it has only played the part which I have set it to do. I thought I should place it more in my power to benefit you by such a course, than if I had manifested the deep regret which I feel at the cold and cruel conduct of those who should have known how to estimate you better."

"I thank you, Sir," returned Margaret: "my position at home must indeed be pitiable, since a stranger can thus be moved to address himself to me upon such a subject."

"That I am a stranger, dear Madam, is a misfortune which time will remove; that I am a genuine and disinterested friend, I hope soon to be able to show."

"I am not altogether friendless, Sir," replied she, "however it may appear; and the few friends whom I possess are sufficient for me."

"It is not well, Madam, to reject friendship, even though it may be tendered by so humble an individual as myself."

At these words, contrasting so strongly with the self-assured and confident manner of the speaker, Margaret could not repress a smile.

"You smile, my dear young lady, which is rare with you—a misfortune to be regretted by all: a day may come, however, which perhaps is not even now a great way off, when your whole life will be a smile. I see already signs of repentance in one who has done you wrong, and who has power to redress that wrong tenfold. If I read the heart of man aright—an accomplishment in which I am thought to have some skill—your Uncle

Ingram only waits for some excuse to take you once more into his loving favour."

"I am not aware, Sir, that my Uncle Ingram has shown himself in your presence as at all wanting in tenderness and affection."

"Not at all," responded Mr. Charlecot eagerly; "and I augur from that fact the best results. I refer rather to the unkindness which he proposes to commit after death; to the unjust and unjustifiable——"

"Sir," interrupted Margaret firmly, "your knowledge of the heart of man may be accurate and subtle enough; but with respect to the feelings of woman, or at least so far as mine are concerned, you show yourself fallible. The habitual want of cheerfulness which you attribute to me is caused in no way by the knowledge that my uncle proposes finally to dispose of his property as he thinks fit."

"I envy you, my good young lady," returned Mr. Charlecot bluntly, "that superiority of mind which sets you above the attractions of mere wealth. In my experience as a man of pleasure, I have seldom seen its parallel, and as a man of business, never; the contemplation of it is charming, and cannot but be elevating to the moral sense. But with regard to this matter of your uncle's will, is there not another's interest involved, another's prospects sacrificed? Forgive me, if I have been misinformed."

"Go on, Sir, if you have anything to suggest, I pray," replied Margaret: "if you have really any further and better end in view than that of wounding my feelings, pray hasten to it."

"I was about to say, my dear young lady, that with respect to that other person, something, perhaps, through proper management, might yet be done."

“Could you indeed do anything for my poor Brother Dick?” cried Maggie anxiously, her face suffused with a sudden glow of expectation, and the coldness of her manner changed at once to passionate appeal. “Oh, if you could, Sir, you would indeed prove yourself to be my friend.”

The bold eyes of Mr. Frederick Charlecot glowed with undisguised admiration as he replied, “I can, my dear Miss Arbour, and I will. A word or two from me to your uncle at the proper time will, I pledge my reputation, bring forth not a little fruit. Nor do I despair of putting both you and your Brother Richard into a position from which you may pay back scorn for scorn, and insult for insult, on those——”

“You are again strangely mistaken, Mr. Charlecot,” interrupted Maggie hastily, “in the character of the person you address. All that I ask is, that the harshness dealt out to my unfortunate and misrepresented brother may be mitigated, and perhaps some amends be made to him.”

“They shall, they shall, my dear Miss Margaret,” cried the other eagerly.

“But the payment, Sir—the price of your assistance? I have unhappily nothing to offer you in return.”

“This little hand,” exclaimed Mr. Charlecot passionately, snatching her gloved fingers—for she was dressed for gardening—and pressing them with ardour to his lips.

So instantaneously did Maggie withdraw the outraged member, that the enamoured swain was left to bestow his caresses upon the well-shaped but tenantless gauntlet she used for protection against thorns.

“You are impudent, Sir,” cried she with flashing eyes. “How dare you offer me this insult? Is it the act of a gentleman—nay, of a man—to take advantage of

one in my position, without natural protector, although —” She stopped suddenly, and her colour rose even higher than before, as the thought of one nearer and dearer than brother flashed across her, whose arm, had it been by, would not have hung idly down during the last few minutes.

Mr. Charlecot, at least for this once, read her mind aright. “I am anticipated, as it seems,” said he; “nor do I wonder that such excellence should have attracted another before me. But still, let me conjure you, if your affections are not yet wholly bestowed, to give me hope—to give me time rather to prove myself worthy of a hope—”

She waved him off as he approached her with a gesture that almost suggested loathing.

“As you please, Madam,” continued he, in an altered tone. “I offered you my friendship, and you rejected it; I offer you my love, and you disdain it. A time will come, perhaps, when you will regret both refusals.”

She answered him not a word; but if Indignation and Scorn had had any Medusean power in them, her countenance would have changed him into Trap, or other inferior description of stone, upon the spot.

“A charming attitude,” continued Mr. Charlecot insolently; “but the statuesque is not my taste. Marble as you fancy yourself, it may be that I possess a weapon which shall yet find your heart out.”

“If you do, Sir, I do not doubt that you will use it without scruple.”

“But not upon *you*, Madam,” returned he with bitterness; “you do me wrong, if you deem me so unknightly.”

“Upon another, then!” she answered vehemently. “You will strike at me through my affection for my brother. Oh wretched man, who, by your very language,

tell me that you behold the depth of your own degradation, from what *have* you fallen that you should play so base a part? Know that not even for his sake, whose misfortunes you threaten to aggravate, and who is to me the dearest——”

“Save one,” interrupted Mr. Charlecot mockingly; “and that one has a father, has he not? an old man, wedded to some foolish trade; indebted to it perhaps for his daily bread—for his daily happiness certainly. Would you not weep, if this delight, if this subsistence were withdrawn from him? Beware lest it should be so. He clogs the wheels of commerce with his prudent sluggishness, and they would run the better if freed from such a drag.”

Every word the man spoke was dropped upon his listener’s ear like vitriol on a wound; and he watched her writhe beneath the torture mercilessly.

“You are not a man,” cried she; “you are not even a coward; you are a fiend.”

“You compliment me, Madam,” returned he; “I am merely one whom the world has agreed to ill-use, and who repays the world after his own humble fashion.”

“To ill-use?” cried Margaret indignantly. “Nay, rather one on whom all good usage is thrown away; whom no prosperity makes thankful, and no increase content; one who seems born to flout at Providence by putting its lavish gifts to evil ends. You to complain of the world’s usage—*you!* I know far better men worse used, worse spoken of. I know of one, your superior in all qualities that become a man, who, lacking your money, manners, powers of persuasion—shall I say, rather, your double-dealing craft, your seeming knowledge (ha! you blush at that; that touches you), who wanting that lacquer of “position” then, that pretence

of soundness, has sunk to low estate with few to pity him."

" You allude to Mr. Richard Arbour, I presume, at present the second butcher in a travelling menagerie of wild animals. The post may have its scientific advantages, but it is certainly not socially high."

" Second butcher!" repeated Margaret to herself. " I wonder whether this man is lying or no."

" I have no prejudices myself," continued Mr. Charlecot calmly; " but other business men, such as your respected uncle, for instance, would be excessively disturbed at the notion of having a second butcher in their family." Then, after a pause, he added: " So we are to be enemies, Miss Margaret, are we? that is settled?"

" I am not your friend, Sir; I would not take your hand in mine for worlds."

" Very good," replied Mr. Charlecot coolly. " I see your charming sister coming this way, who, I flatter myself, will scarcely share your prejudices in that respect. Are you for an hour's gudgeon-fishing, Miss Maria?"

Mr. Frederick Charlecot had thus declared open war with Margaret before courting the alliance of her sister, and he was not long before he put his hostile intentions into action. He showed himself to possess at least that modicum of virtue which is implied in the expression " being as good as one's word." He insinuated with the utmost subtlety into Mr. Ingram Arbour's failing mind the danger that he lay in of stultifying his own determination, by rescinding that sentence of excommunication passed against the Scapegrace of the family and his abettor. Every kind word which the old man addressed to his younger niece was carefully treasured up by the three conspirators, and used as a weapon against her. Every generous action was pointed to as a probable fore-

runner of that great gift which should make amends to the disobedient pair for all. When these things failed to effect their final purpose in causing the old merchant to put the disposal of his property out of his own power, it was hinted that his Nephew Richard, disinherited though he was, was calculating upon his uncle's decease, and actually borrowing money upon those expectations, which he had been so solemnly warned did not exist ; while finally, Mr. Arbour was informed—thanks to Mr. Charlecot, who had by some means possessed himself of that secret—what post that young gentleman was occupying in Mr. Tredgold's establishment, to enjoy which he had quitted that eminently respectable one provided for him in Darkendim Street.

All the importunities of his two designing kinsfolk, aided by their skilful ally, could not, however, prevail upon the merchant to sign any Deed of Gift. He had, he said, the highest confidence in the rectitude of Adolphus, the greatest reliance upon the dutiful affection of Maria, the warmest admiration for the judgment of his young friend Mr. Frederick Charlecot, but to take off his clothes before he retired finally to rest, still seemed to him an unnecessary proceeding. “Who,” he inquired querulously, “had so much as heard of so anticipatory a measure before ? Had they themselves ? Had anybody ? Where was their precedent for such a suicidal and unnecessary act ?”

“King Lear,” whispered Mr. Charlecot to Maria sardonically ; and, in her great desire to convince, the young lady was within a hairsbreadth of quoting that royal example.

The Deed of Gift, then, was never executed ; but as if to compensate for his obstinacy in that respect, Mr. Ingram Arbour lent himself more and more to the com-

mercial schemes of Adolphus and his speculative adviser, and allowed them entirely to overrule the more temperate suggestions of Mr. Mickleham. So craftily, indeed, did they sow the seeds of disagreement between the head of the firm and that gentleman, that the latter very soon forbore to give expression to any remonstrances at all. The trusty Master to whom the Captain had formerly been wont to appeal on all grave occasions, had now to sit sorrowful and idly in his cabin, while the good ship was being piloted by inexperienced and reckless hands.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PITCHER IS BROKEN AT LAST.

AFTER the night with the lioness, and the punishment of Mr. Bairman for his somewhat murderous practical joke, matters went on in the travelling menagerie as usual until the summer days came round again, when an honour was conferred upon it about equivalent to that of Knight Companion of the Bath with Mr. and Mrs. Tredgold, and C.B.s with the rest of the company. The whole establishment being in the neighbourhood of Windsor, and the drawing-rooms, pink, white, and blue, at the castle being, I suppose, voted dull in those July evenings, it was commanded to exhibit itself before majesty in one of the courtyards.

Such a green ribbon had never before been conferred upon any but a Wombwell or an Edwards (although Mr. Tredgold had often hinted, both vocally and in his bills, to the contrary), and the excitement was proportionally tremendous. Mr. Mopes, who was not to be permitted to enliven the royal mind by his usual dissertation upon natural history, alone was discontented, and entertained no expectation of knighthood. Everybody else hoped that some comparatively harmless animal would make its escape, so that he might distinguish himself by interposing between royalty and certain destruction. Extra pains, however, were taken to prevent the possibility of any

such incident ; every bar and board were examined narrowly, four-and-twenty hours before the great event came off. The Lion-tamer of Central Africa was literally in the highest feather, and had been presented by his proprietor with a new leopard-skin—his old one being considerably dimmed as to its spots, if it could not be said to have changed them. It was rightly concluded that upon him would mainly depend the success of the exhibition, as well as the fame of its proprietor. His own reputation as a zoological monarch was now to be established in the presence of a queen of an empire upon which the sun never sets, and wherein every variety of wild animal is to be found. In future, "As performed before the Queen, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York," and as many other grandees as should chance to be present, or whose names, if absent, might be good for a bill, would be appended to the public advertisements of his performance. The occasion, in short, was "supreme," and Tickerocandua felt it to be so. He was determined to outdo himself as a tigress-compeller. The blood-thirsty Bengal we have already spoken of was a beast of few accomplishments, and did not exhibit those she possessed with any great willingness. It was Tickerocandua's intention, for this great Once at least, to induce the animal to enact a part in a dramatic representation with her cage-companion, the lion. The piece was simple enough in plot, but abounded in "situations" and hoops. The rehearsals were numerous, and succeeded one another very quickly by reason of the little time that was left for preparation. On the evening before that of the grand castle performance, there had been no less than three rehearsals, and the tigress was even yet imperfect in her cues. Her magnificent companion roared and bounded to admiration whenever the action of the drama

demanded those exertions, and finally represented rampant his portion of the royal arms for the concluding tableau; but the Bengal was all tail and teeth, and stuck in the hoops.

“Tredgold has promised me a tenner,” observed Tickerocandua confidentially to Dick, “for every new trick that the beasts will do to-morrow; and if all goes well, he will raise my salary to two hundred. And now here’s that ’ere pig-headed Semiramis a-jibbing at her jumps, with only time for one more teaching of her.”

“There is not even time for that, I fear,” returned Dick. “I have been putting out the meat already in the barrows, and it will never do to put it back again, now that they have once caught sight of it.”

“I can’t help that,” returned the beast-tamer doggedly, “I must give Semiramis her last lesson before I go to bed to-night.”

“Surely not with the food before her eyes,” expositated Dick: “you have often told me yourself how dangerous it is to meddle with the beasts at such a time. With the temper, too, which that brute has, it would be madness.”

It was a rule in Mr. Tredgold’s establishment that no man should interfere with the beasts while they were feeding, or even while their food was within sight of them; the attention of wild animals, like that of some tame ones, being apt to be concentrated upon their dinners, any attempt to divert them from which is extremely perilous.

“Her ladyship must whisk her tail a little more fiercely before she frightens me out of two hundred a year,” responded Tickerocandua. “It’s only her obstinacy, I know, for she is as sharp as Ajax if she chooses.”

The beast-tamer was not referring to the sharpness of

the Grecian hero characterised by the poet as *acerrimus*, but to the sagacity of her ladyship's companion of that name, the lion.

"There is none so deaf as those who won't hear," replied Dick didactically. "You may drive a tiger to water, but you can't make him turn summersaults."

"Birds as can't sing, and won't sing," retorted the beast-tamer grimly, "must be made to sing."

Apt and illustrative of the case in point as this counter-proverb might be, it was, however, a perilous determination of spirit that took the beast-tamer back to his grim pupils, tired and sick as ever human actors were of their reiterated rehearsals, and hungry for the suppers which they gazed upon through their bars. Dick heard the clink of a bottle as he left the caravan of his friend, whereby he guessed that Tickerocandua was refreshing himself ere going about his wearisome task—a thing which, frequent as it was with him *after* a performance, he had never yet known him to do before entering a den. It was impossible, of course, to give out the meat at the usual hour, and Mr. Richard Arbour employed himself, in the meantime, in another duty—that of looking to the ventilators of the cages. These were placed above the caravans, like the lamp-holes in first-class railway carriages, and through them the occupants of the dens might be reconnoitred in safety, as from that point of vantage at which Darius the king is represented in the peep-shows looking anxiously down upon the den of lions to which Daniel has been committed on the previous evening. Dick presently came to that particular ventilator which opened upon Semiramis and Ajax, whom the beast-tamer was by that time "coaching" for their dramatic representation. The lion was performing his part with an unwilling obedience,

putting in an occasional inarticulate protest in the form of a protracted roar. The tigress was smiling and noiseless, walking round and round Tickerocandua, and making an unreserved exhibition of her tremendous teeth, but by no means identifying herself so much as could be wished with her part in the drama. Intensely wrapped up in the prospect of the cold meat that offered itself to her within the exhibition—which, it being long past the closing hour, was entirely destitute of spectators—she would ever and anon put her nose to the bars, and inhale its grateful perfume! “Man, man!” roared she with a frightful impatience, and then, returning to her tutor, would sniff and sneer around *him*, as though she would observe, that there was as good meat within bars, after all, as lay outside of them.

“My good friend,” cried Dick, speaking through the aperture, “do pray come away for to-night, and leave Semiramis to her supper. To-morrow morning she may be tractable enough, but to-night——”

“She’s got the taste of my predecessor in her mouth, eh,” interrupted Tickerocandua grimly! “She may or she mayn’t for all I care, but she shall go through the double-hoop, at all events, as sure as I’m a living man.” And as he spoke, he held up the instrument in question, and cracked his whip for about the twentieth time—in vain.

In one instant—in a quarter of a second—in a space so short that Dick’s eye could scarcely follow the action, Tickerocandua was down—tripped up by the tigress’s fore-paw as a wrestler trips his rival—down, and bitten through the thigh with those cruel teeth, so that the strong man in his agony gave forth a shriek more like a cry from some of the wild creatures round him, than any human speech. Then he was silent, mercifully

stricken dumb and senseless, while the beast stood over him, licking her bloody paws, and with every hair in her wicked beautiful coat astir with fury and lust for blood.

“Curse thee, thou striped devil!” cried Dick from the roof above, and rained his hate upon the brute so fiercely and suddenly, that she slunk away, and shrank into the furthest corner of the den. “Murderous beast, tearer of the hand that fed thee—— I come, my friend; stir not, move not for your life—— Foul creature! sneaking coward!” continued he, not daring to withdraw eye or voice from the orifice, while with outstretched hand he gashed the tarpaulin roof of the show with his clasp-knife, so that he might thereby descend immediately, and open the cage-door the quicker—“for every mark of thy damned teeth thy hide shall pay.”

A crowd of persons connected with the exhibition,—among whom was Mr. Mopes, wringing his hands with genuine anguish,—were collected round the bars of the cage, horrified at what was doing, but not daring to interfere between the enraged animal and the completion of her bloody work; nor must the general inaction be too hastily condemned, since not one of them had ever been inside a den with a lion, far less a tigress, while he who would enter the one in question had need not only to secure his own safety, and that of the unhappy beast-tamer, but to prevent the infuriated Semiramis from escaping by the door which admitted him, and so scattering wounds and death among unknown numbers. To Mr. Tredgold’s credit it must be stated, that though strongly fortified within his own residence, and only trusting his voice through one of the shutter-slides, he never ceased to call upon others to fetch fire-arms, and rescue his faithful Tickerocandua at the cost,

if it were necessary, of the lives of both lion and tiger. The only unsympathising spectators were the lion himself—who calmly lay down and yawned, as though the business was none of his, and only to be regretted inasmuch as it still further postponed supper-time,—and Mr. Bairman, who, from a considerable distance, was regarding the spectacle as though he could never have enough of it.

For nothing of what was passing within or without, did the animal who had worked all this mischief seem to care, but with eyes wandering from her prostrate victim to Dick's face above, she appeared to be divided between the desire of prosecuting her vengeance and the fear of the consequences of such a proceeding. Whenever his voice ceased, were it but for an instant, she shifted her hind-legs restlessly, as if to spring, and sunk down again dissatisfied, but trembling, when the tones were renewed. At last, when Dick had sawn a hole through the tarpaulin sufficiently large, he squeezed himself through it, and swung himself down by his hands into the interior of the show.

Rapidly as he effected this, the vengeful brute was yet beforehand with him. Taking instantaneous advantage of his withdrawal to renew her attack, she seized the still unconscious Tickerocandua by the chest, and cracked his breast-bone in her dreadful jaws. Still in swoon, however, the poor beast-tamer knew it not, and neither stirred nor moaned. Then it was, singularly enough, when it was evident to all that the man was dead, and no further harm could happen to him, that Mr. Mopes began to open the cage-door, determined, at all hazards, to save the inanimate form from desecration ; but he was thrust aside in the very act by Dick, who, seizing a crowbar, leaped into the den, and, dealing a

tremendous blow at the cowering tigress, lifted his dead friend out—lightly and tenderly as a bride—and bidding the people close the door, as though it had been any other door, would have borne him unassisted to his own dwelling, had not Mr. Mopes, reverently taking up the feet of the corpse, assisted him. The rest were scarce more struck with the horror of the spectacle than with the courage and affection manifested by the young man, and with one consent forbore to follow, and interfere between him and his grief.

“Shall I run for the doctor?” inquired Mr. Mopes of Dick, as of his acknowledged chief in this dreadful matter.

“Nay,” replied he sadly, “not all the doctors in the world could give him breath for a single moment. We will fetch one presently; but, in the meantime, tell the people to be silent, and not spread the news abroad, for Mr. Tredgold’s sake. If this gallant soul could speak, he would say the same, for I am sure that his last thought would be for others. If it gets about that the lion-tamer is dead, the performance must needs be put off for to-morrow, and perhaps the establishment be permanently injured.”

“And who is to help it?” exclaimed Mr. Mopes, in astonishment. “How on earth can it be otherwise, now that poor Robinson has come to this?”

It was observable that whoever now spoke of the dead man called him by his real name, and not by the assumed title by which he had been always formerly addressed.

“That is for our master to consider,” returned Dick gravely. “Am I not right, my friend?” continued he, apostrophising the dead body. “Ah, Mr. Mopes, you do not know how kind and honest a heart lies here, that

will never beat again. I have neither father nor mother, and this man was both to me."

"He hasn't left an enemy in the world," cried the tender-hearted lecturer, "unless, at least, it be Bairman ; and to have Bairman against one is a matter creditable to anybody. He was always risky for himself, and careful for other people. He has not left his equal for lion and tiger taming alive. There's his new leopard-skin, see, a hanging up so spick and span, and who's to wear it?"

There was a gentle knock at the door that opened into the interior apartment.

"Come in," cried Dick mournfully ; "there's nobody to be disturbed here now."

A diminutive female figure, of a clay colour, entered quietly, and approached the dead man with a swift but noiseless step. She took no notice of either Dick or his companion, but taking from her left arm a bracelet of shells, placed it at the feet of the corpse, at the same time reverently inclining her head. On her return, the door was gently opened for her by an unseen hand, and the Earthman was heard modulating his harsh gutturals with some success, and throwing an unmistakable pathos into his "Woggadaboo" and "Wiggidy." The sorrow, almost inarticulate as it was, of the two poor Earth people touched the hearts of both spectators deeper than the most eloquent panegyric upon the dead man's memory could possibly have done. Bought and sold, exhibited and laughed at, as those two half-naked savages had been, there yet lay a feeling within them for one who had been uniformly kind to them, more beautiful by a thousand times than any mental product of civilisation. The Earthwoman had given her bracelet as the woman in the parable had bestowed her mite.

"Oh Lord ! Oh Lord ! to think of that poor dumb creetur with her shells !" cried Mr. Mopes. "I had rather that that had been done to my dead body, than if it had been buried in Westminster Abbey."

"God bless her !" exclaimed Dick fervently. "God forgive me that I ever laughed at one of his creatures so much better than I."

"How all the gug-gug-goodness of a chap seems to come out at a moment like this," sobbed Mr. Mopes. "I mind me now how he nursed me three years ago, just as though I was a suckling infant, when I had broken my leg off the dromedary. He hadn't a fault, hadn't poor Robinson, except perhaps it was Old Tom."

"Hush !" replied Dick reproachfully ; "this is not a time to speak of a man's faults, even when one is sure of them. I don't think he ever drank for drinking's sake."

Mr. Mopes looked up with amazement, as though he would like to know what better reason need be given for any man's drinking than that of his liking it.

"He never took kindly to his trade," continued Dick, "and therefore the greater the credit to him that he did it so well. He often drank spirits because he felt himself unequal to his work without them. Since you and he were friends, and in order that you may defend his memory, I will let you see what is written down here in his pocket-book. Look at the figures set opposite to these last dates : 4480, 4481, 4482, are all in this day's work, and there is a space still left for the 4483."

"What does it mean ?" inquired Mr. Mopes. "What can it mean ?"

"It means, that whenever that brave man went among these devilish beasts, it was with the certain knowledge that that must one day happen which has

happened to-day. If he had come out alive to-night, it would have been, according to his judgment, his 4483rd *escape*."

Dick filled in the figures with his own hand, wrote after them, "*periiit HENRY ROBINSON*," and put the note-book into his own breast-pocket.

"And yet to see him among them roaring creeturs," gasped Mr. Mopes, "one would have thought him as composed and cheerful as though they were so many sofa-cushions. Why, if *he* was afraid, who, in the name of wonder, will be found to take his place to-morrow before the queen and court?"

"That is Mr. Tredgold's business," returned Dick quietly; "and I must now go and speak with him upon that subject. The strangers will be coming presently whose office is with this dead body, for whom, alas, no friend can now do anything more."





CHAPTER XXIX.

A DANGEROUS PROPOSITION.

MR. TREDGOLD'S caravan was more difficult of entrance upon the night of poor Tickerocandua's death than it had ever been before. Dick's proprietor even proposed to that young gentleman (through the shutter) that their conversation should be carried on as in that scene of *Romeo and Juliet* where one occupies a post of vantage, and sentimentalises out of the window ; but the youth would by no means consent to this.

“ What I have got to say is for your private ear, Mr. Tredgold, and is of some importance to us both.” So the patron of lion-tamers undid bolt, and bar, and chain, with lingering fingers, and when the young man was admitted, refastened them with excessive precipitation.

“ One cannot be too careful,” observed Mr. Tredgold, “ with such an awful example before us as has happened this day. It is a lesson against foolhardiness that ought to last every man of us throughout our lives. How I have warned and warned that poor fellow Robinson not to be so rash, no mortal can tell.”

Dick bethought himself of the ten pound premium offered to “ poor Robinson” the preceding evening for every new trick, and began to despise his proprietor very heartily ; and yet there was little or no cause for

his indignation. Mr. Tredgold *had* warned the deceased lion-tamer again and again, and it was against his express orders that the tigress had been meddled with while the food was before her eyes. Blame of a very serious nature, too, was likely to attach itself to the owner of the beast for what had happened, and he was naturally anxious to make his own case good to whomsoever he could. Besides, although *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* is an excellent sentiment in irreproachable Latin, there is a temptation for minds not absolutely magnanimous to shift the burden of their faults upon shoulders that are better able to bear it, and what shoulders can be more adapted for that purpose than those of a dead man?

“For my part,” continued Mr. Tredgold testily, “I forgive him from the bottom of my soul; although, after what has happened, I may just as well shut up my establishment, and take to the workhouse.”

“He didn’t get killed on purpose,” observed Dick bitterly; “I saw the whole occurrence myself, and can assure you of that.”

“You are wronging me, Arbour,” returned Mr. Tredgold, with some dignity. “Heaven knows I would have gladly sacrificed five hundred pounds to have secured that unhappy man’s safety. If he has any relative at this moment living who has any claim upon him, I —”

“What a mercy,” exclaimed Mrs. Tredgold, entering the apartment rather hastily at this juncture—“what a mercy it is that that poor chap has left neither chick nor child behind him! There’s always a something to comfort one, even under the worst circumstances; leastways, it is so with most people, although Mr. Tredgold and me, it seems, are like to be made exceptions. You

don't know what Mr. Robinson was to us, Arbour, and therefore cannot fully appreciate his loss. We looked upon him more like a brother than as one in our employ, I do assure you; and now," sobbed the lady, putting her pocket-handkerchief to her eyes—"and now he is gone away from us for ever, and a matter of three hundred a year along with him."

"Ay," added Mr. Tredgold, "and such a name as we should have made if it had only happened, say next week, or the day after to-morrow. But now, here's the Queen herself a-coming to look at us, and nothing to shew her but Ninus and them loppeting elephants. I must let Mopes give her his lecture, I do believe; and yet if he isn't in a good temper, as is like enough, he will abuse the poor dumb creeturs — just as though they were *his* property—so as it makes my blood quite boil to listen to him. She has got the programme too—gilt letters upon white satin, Dick—with all poor Robinson's new tricks upon it, and nobody to go through with them. After what has happened, if it gets abroad, maybe they will not let us exhibit at all. I have half a mind to go down to the police myself, and insist on their stopping us."

"We must be at the castle by five," observed Dick musing, "if we mean to get everything ready by the afternoon. She's as punctual, they say, as clock-work."

"There's nothing to get ready," returned Mr. Tredgold despairingly. "Who will care to look at them lions with never a man to show them off?"

"What would you give if a man was found to venture his life and go in among them?" inquired Dick carelessly.

"What would I give?" returned the proprietor with

animation. "I'd give anything ; that is to say anything in moderation. I'd give a ten pound note."

"That was the sum you offered for each trick to a man who had been with those creatures more than four thousand times before."

"Ay, for tricks ; but just for going among them and standing there—why, it's the easiest thing in the world, my good young man. There is no real danger ; none whatever, if you only keep up a bold front. It's the meddling with them—it's the forcing them to pretend to go a hunting as them lions don't like ; it's the hoop-business that riles *them*, bless you. But as to just going in and staring at 'em, why, my dear young Sir, the power of the human eye is such——"

"Very well, then," interrupted Dick ; "if that be the case, I think we can manage the matter. You and I will go together into the cages."

"Heaven forbid !" ejaculated Mr. Tredgold piously. "I go into one of them devil's dens ! Do you hear him, Mrs. Tredgold ? I, Sir ? No, not if you'd pay me down first upon this here table the whole of the National Debt in golden guineas. I feel wet—positively wet with perspiration, Sir, at the very notion of it. A pretty thing, indeed, for me to be swallowed up in the presence of my rightful sovereign."

"But I thought you said it was so easy," reasoned Dick, "and that there was scarcely any real danger in it."

"So it is," repeated the unabashed proprietor—"so it is, for any person that is any way used to them. I have never had anything to do with lions myself, as you have had. The cockatoos are my favourites. I don't mind the cockatoos or the marmosets ; but my nerves—I give you my honour—are so singularly constituted

with respect to the larger animals —— Gracious mercy, what in the world is that ? ”

A savage whine—a whine of a hundred horse-power—rang through the apartment, and froze the current of Mr. Tredgold’s speech.

“ It’s only the tigress — it’s only Semiramis,” explained Dick with coolness. “ They have taken away her supper to-night in punishment, and she is complaining of it a little ; that’s all. A ten pound note, it seems, is the price you consider reasonable for making her acquaintance to-morrow.”

“ I said fifteen,” replied Mr. Tredgold hastily ; “ and if I didn’t say fifteen, I meant it. Fifteen for Sem— What a fearful tantrum she is in ! Do, pray, let somebody give her her supper, or she’ll be out. Fifteen for the tigress, and ten for the lions. One pound a minute for merely standing still, Mr. Arbour ; what do you think of *that* ? ”

“ A pound for the *first* minute, and the rest of the money paid to my executors,” replied Dick drily ; “ what do you think of *that* ? ”

“ And a hundred a-year, if you take to the business, and teach a trick or two,” added Mr. Tredgold, as if the intervening remark had not been made.

“ Listen to me one moment,” replied Dick gravely. “ I came here to-night with a certain purpose in my mind, which most persons—and yourself as much as any—would consider to be a mad one. What has urged me to take it is no affair of yours, nor is it your duty to dissuade me from an enterprise for which I consider myself fully capable. Look upon my proposal simply from a business point of view, and then either accept it or reject it. I offer myself to fill Tickerocandua’s place before the Queen to-morrow ; and I take advantage of a pressing emergency and an unprecedented occasion to

demand better terms for myself than I could have otherwise procured. I ask, if I shall be successful to-morrow, the same annual income of two hundred pounds which you promised to your deceased servant—— Stay, let me speak to the end—if otherwise, I shall require only a grave in Windsor churchyard by the side of my dead friend. Let the posters and advertisements remain, as they run now, in Tickerocandua's name. I will not disgrace it by any pusillanimous conduct; while, if I die, I shall do no worse than he has done. I know the nature of the creatures with whom I have to deal as well, if not better than he did, and I fully comprehend the means whereby their obedience is secured."

"But the tricks?" expostulated Mr. Tredgold, aghast at the audacity of the proposition, but by no means blind to the advantages which it held forth. "You will surely never do the tricks?"

"I shall not, but the animals will," replied Dick decisively. "Semiramis will perform her part in the new drama to-morrow, or there will be an element introduced into the performance of a very tragic character, you may take my word for it."

"I tell you what, young Arbour," exclaimed Mrs. Tredgold with quite a burst of enthusiasm, "I wish you was a son of my own, I do indeed; although, I suppose, if I had happened to have had one, he wouldn't have made this offer of going among the animals,—the feeling against lions being doubtless an hereditary prejudice. If I was indeed your mother, I'd say this instant, '*Go; go and distinguish yourself before your suffering monarch;*' but being only, as it were, your guardian, I say: '*No; stop a bit; think over the matter to-night. Don't take up the thing rashly and in a hurry; but if in the morning, you are of the same brave mind, why——'*'

Dick was touched by this unexpected tenderness on the part of his mistress, and took her hand in his.

“Why, it certainly would be a first-rate opening for a young man,” added Mr. Tredgold in conclusion.

“Stuff and nonsense,” retorted his spouse. “Let the young man choose for himself, and do not lure him on to what may chance to be his destruction. Let his blood be at least upon his own head, and not on ours.”

Mrs. Tredgold was quite in a virtuous glow of disinterestedness by this time. When selfish persons do make a self-denying proposition, and find it duly appreciated, there is often no knowing where they will stop. Mr. Tredgold began with reason to be alarmed.

“You pig-headed old she-unicorn”—he began, as usual.

“Don’t be angry,” interrupted Dick with a grave smile, “you need not fear that your good wife will change my purpose. I have quite made up my mind as to taking poor Robinson’s place, and to-morrow morning will not alter it. Two hundred a year, then, are the terms you agree to, Mr. Tredgold !”

“Two hundred a year!” reiterated that gentleman, casting up his hands. “Why, you are a gentleman made. What a tremendous income.”

“Three hundred a year is, however, a still greater one,” responded Dick quietly. “You will clear that sum of money after all, your wife herself allowed.”

Mr. Tredgold threw a glance at his consort which portended squalls and “stormy” for the matrimonial barometer of that night.

“And then consider the Queen,” added Dick. “What a position would you have been placed in when the hour for the lion-hunt arrived to-morrow, without any lion-hunter !”

“The crown of feathers and the new leopard-skin

shall both be yours," exclaimed the proprietor with a gush of generosity. "Some persons would consider it reward sufficient to be permitted to appear before their monarch in a costume so unique and splendid."

"You wouldn't have me put on evening dress," responded Dick sardonically; "people go out to dine in that, but not to be dined upon."

"Don't talk of such a thing," replied Mr. Tredgold earnestly; "don't mention it again—there's a good fellow. Now that it is all settled, I feel quite sorry that you are going to risk it. I didn't force your inclinations, however, in any way, did I, Arbour? We are very good friends, are we not, Dick? Now, do say that. It would be so very much more comfortable to me to think *that* in case anything *should* happen; although there is not the least chance of such a thing—humanly speaking—not the least. You will be perfectly certain to fasten the cage-doors after you, *the first thing*, will you? Poor Robinson was always exceedingly careful about making sure of *them*. If any of the creatures got by you—"

"Or *over* me," suggested Dick, smiling.

"Yes, or *over* you," continued Mr. Tredgold simply, "and out of the cage among the people, you would never forgive yourself, I'm sure."

"I dare say not," returned Dick drily.

"Consider, my dear Sir, that her Majesty herself might be imperilled; that, in such a case, it would be *my* duty, my privilege, as the proprietor of this establishment, to step in and interfere, and that my nerves *might* fail me. The personal safety of the sovereign—the stability of the very government of the country—are in a manner, Richard Arbour, placed to-morrow in *your* hands."

"I will do my best, Sir," returned Dick quietly ; "and Tickerocandua himself could have done no more."

With these words, and after a hearty shake of the hand from his proprietor and proprietress, the young man retired to seek that repose which was so needful a preparation for the morrow's work. Sleep, however, refused to visit him. Though the body of his dead friend had been removed in the meantime from the caravan, everything in the apartment reminded him of him who had perished in that very walk of life wherein his own feet were now set so stubbornly. When his thoughts escaped from that dread companionship, they fled to subjects equally engrossing if less painful. The lovely form of Lucy Mickleham flitted to and fro before his eyes, intangible and unapproachable. It was for her sake, or rather for his own sake as respected her, that he had accepted the hazardous post which had offered itself to him that evening after so terrible a fashion. As second butcher, he could not even bring himself to let her know his degraded calling ; as the Lion-tamer of Central Africa, despite the exceeding ludicrousness of the situation, there was a nobility in its personal peril which would rescue it, in her eyes, as he fondly hoped, from shame.

The income was not despicable, and his sanguine mind already looked forward to its increase. He knew how valuable his self-taught knowledge of the natures and constitutions of the beasts with which he had to deal had been and would be to his proprietor ; how well he could advise him—and his advice would now be sought for in the first instance—as to what animals should be purchased and at what price, and what were failing to "draw," and should be disposed of. He had already, through an unforeseen and deplorable accident, achieved a position which was, in a pecuniary point of view, a

really good one. There was surely a far less unlikely chance of its future improvement. A partnership with Mr. Tredgold, and in the end a sleeping partnership—a retirement upon a competency—such were the visions of promise that filled the young man's mind, and induced him to adopt one of the most perilous modes of life that ever fell to the lot of mortal. They were indeed nothing in themselves, but what a bright and shining goal they led to. Each success, each amendment in his fortunes, would be to him as so many refreshing halting-places upon his toilsome road towards the hand of Lucy Mickleham. How long, how steep that might be, was not now to be considered—he had only just set foot upon it, and there was nothing for him but to trudge steadily on without murmuring; only his mind's eye, overlooking every obstacle—arduous steep, and bridgeless river, and windings and turnings of the way innumerable—fixed itself not unhopefully upon the journey's end.

On the other hand, Richard Arbour was by no means blind to the Quixotic character of his undertaking. He was well aware, if even the best possible good fortune should happen to him in the quickest time, if, still young and unharmed, and comparatively wealthy, he should come to demand his wife's reward from good Mr. Mickleham, that Lucy might still be withheld from him by her prudent father. He could not conceal from himself that the nature of his previous occupation (that of a mere gladiator kept for the amusement of the public, and who risked his life hourly among savage beasts for gain) would militate powerfully, and perhaps fatally against him, not only with the steady-going old man of business, but with his son—a man, perhaps, not less sensitive to the opinion of the world, and alive to social prejudices, for all his personal sagacity, and keen sense of the weaknesses of

others. Richard Arbour, who had once sat at respectable men's feasts himself, and heard bells chime to church, and helped to fill a family pew, was not unaware of what Society would have to say, in the event of an ex lion tamer of Central Africa soliciting the hand of a lady connected with an eminent commercial firm. Society and he had had not a few personal combats already, which had resulted, as usual, in the complete victory of that Amazon. Dick was hoping almost against hope—poor fellow—but still he *was* hoping ; nay, before slumber visited his eyes that night, he was doing something better—he was praying. Society will be astonished and probably shocked to hear it. He was praying for “succour, help, and comfort” against the danger of the morrow ; adopting phrases out of the Litany, just as though he had been in the habit of paying tithe and church-rate, and had a perfect right to use them. He thought—rather illogically, perhaps, and certainly with no hesitation as to whether the passage be metaphorical or otherwise—of him who fought with the wild beasts at Ephesus, and was yet preserved. The Book which his dear dead mother had given to him was in his possession yet, from which an equal comfort flows to lion tamer and church-warden. Perhaps her sainted soul was cognizant of what her son was humbly doing that night, and a joy was thereby added to the happiness of heaven. Albeit, Society, with a shudder that shakes her crinoline, apprehends not, and trusts, in her heart of hearts—her whalebone of whalebones—that “a line will be drawn somewhere” even *there*.



CHAPTER XXX.

BEFORE THE QUEEN.

DHE Romans of old were scarcely less gratified and astonished in the persons of their Commissioners of the Paving, when that ugly gulf across the Forum was closed up by the self-sacrifice of Marcus Curtius—that first mounted Volunteer—than were Mr. Tredgold's company when they heard that Tickerocandua's vacant post of danger was to be filled by Dick. Mixed with their gratification, indeed, there were some apprehensions for his safety—for Dick was a public favourite—but these were not so strong as to overpower the desire of seeing a young gentleman in company with lions for the first time. Mr. Mopes shook his head, and only hoped the thing would turn out well for so bold a lad. Mr. Bairman rubbed his sanguinary hands, and observed drily, that the affair would be interesting in any case. Everybody thought it the height of foolhardiness that Dick should trust himself with Semiramis after what had so recently occurred, especially, too, as Mr. Tredgold himself declared such a risk to be quite unnecessary, and the ordinary entertainment of the establishment amply sufficient; but Dick, since he had put his hand to the work, was determined to “go the whole tigress,” and nothing less. His interview with that lady and Ajax, in their new drama, was to conclude, and his lion-hunt in Central Africa to commence the entertainment, with a

space between the two of some half hour, during which the other curiosities of the menagerie were to be exhibited. The caravans were arranged in a semicircle, with the cages of the *Felinæ* in the centre, of which her Majesty could command an uninterrupted view from the opposite bank of the court-yard. The sloping greensward which surrounded the enclosure on all sides was filled with spectators both numerous and select. Her Majesty, who of course defrayed the whole expenses, had, with her usual thoughtfulness, invited such of the Eton boys as chose to come to be witnesses of it. They clustered around the scene of attraction like bees, nor could they be prevented from tickling the noses and pulling the tails of all such animals as incautiously lay within reach of their nimble fingers. The new Tickerocandua of course was kept in retirement until the moment for action should arrive. He had preferred to have no rehearsal of the *rôle* he was about to play, but to call upon the animals to perform their parts while they were yet untired and in good temper. Whatever anxiety he might have been in—and it must be remembered that custom and knowledge had made him far more confident than when he had been the trembling guest of the lioness—he at least betrayed none in his countenance, which was by no means the case with his proprietor, who visited his caravan for the last time before taking his own place at the foot of that portion of the grassy slope which had been reserved for the Queen and court.

“Richard Arbour,” observed he with earnestness, “remember that even now, at this last moment, I do not urge you to enter a single cage. For Heaven’s sake, dismiss me and my interests entirely from your thoughts, and act only according to your own wishes and feelings.”

“Thank you, Sir,” returned Dick smiling; “but that, I assure you, is exactly what I am doing. I am thinking entirely of myself and my own affairs.”

He was indeed repeating “Lucy” and “Maggie” to himself alternately, as though they were charms against every peril, and keeping his mind purposely fixed upon anything rather than those seven cruel beasts among whom the next few minutes must needs find him.

“And look you, Dick,” continued Mr. Tredgold hoarsely, and mopping his perspiring brow with his pocket-handkerchief—for besides his terror upon Dick’s account, he himself had an ordeal to undergo in his approaching attendance upon Majesty, the thought of which produced copious deliquescence—“and look you, do not hesitate to use the whip—the butt-end—hard and strong, if you deem life in danger.” He added three words in a mysterious whisper.

“Over the nose,” repeated Dick with a grave smile. “Yes, Mr. Tredgold, I was well aware of the place upon which to hit them. I am no foolhardy boy, as some here think, but understand what I have taken in hand, and am fully prepared for all contingencies.”

“They are none of them worth less than a hundred and fifty pounds,” quoth Mr. Tredgold; “and yet I swear to you that I would rather lose them all than that you should die, Dick.”

“I believe you, Mr. Tredgold, and I thank you. I trust, too, most sincerely, that no such sacrifice may be necessary. Nevertheless, I tell you fairly, that I never intended to hesitate between the loss of my own life and that of a wild beast.”

This tone, so respectful, yet so independent, so modest, and yet so fearless, astonished Mr. Tredgold, as it would have done any man who had known Dick in his former

subordinate capacity. Under others, and in a groove wherein original action was denied to him, Dick might have been quite easily surpassed by those of his own age ; but now that he was in a position to think and act for himself, there were few indeed who would have so well acquitted themselves. Dick's was one of those natures which bit and spur do but ruin, but which, if the rein be left loose upon the neck, rapidly develop themselves into greatness. It is doubtful whether Garibaldi himself would have been pronounced a good soldier, if he had happened to have found himself in a regiment commanded by some Earl of Cardigan. The Family Scapegrace is, of course, an always exceptional character, while unhappily the post of lion-tamer, or other fitting situation, is exceptional too, and by no means always offers itself. Generally, as in Dick's case, it has to be sought out by the lad himself, and where there is no Maggie left at home, in that house with the shut door, for the wayward heart to turn to in its bitter moments, that lonely and unfriended search is too apt to be fatal. Between the Scapegrace and the Scamp—the Irreclaimable—the steps are perilously few, and there are but too many who take them at a single bound. There was, however, surely something of native nobility not altogether lost as yet in *this* lad's heart, who, on the brink of such an enterprise as his, could disclaim the undue imputation of magnanimity ; who could tell his master so ingenuously, "This matter is my own affair—a totally unheroic piece of business, undertaken for my own advantage, and not yours. My life, humble as it may seem, is yet of more value to me than any amount of property which you, Sir, may have invested in wild animals. Do not suppose for a moment that I shall fall an unresisting victim to two or three hundred pounds' worth of teeth and claws."

Mr. Tredgold regarded the young man with evident admiration. "You are a right honest fellow, Dick," said he: "there is not a man in the company whom I respect so much as I do you, and there's my hand upon it. Good Heavens! if there isn't the Queen; I hear them Eton chaps a-shouting like costermongers. God bless you, Dick, and deliver you, and keep you safe. And off hurried Mr. Tredgold, not without great misgivings, to the post of honour that had been thrust upon him.

Dick drew on his heavy jack boots, adjusted the new leopard-skin upon his shoulders, settled the crown of eagle's feathers upon his forehead, grasped his whip, and marched out of the caravan. An animating scene was before him: his Queen and her nobles formed a brilliant assemblage at no great distance, to whom he made respectful obeisance, and a vast throng of spectators intervened, whose thousand eyes were fixed upon him and upon him only; but he saw nothing of this; his own eyes were looking upon two absent faces mirrored within his memory—that of his sister and that of his love. A ringing cheer greeted him from the boys—for his gallant appearance was such as to call forth a cheer from all youthful lips—as well as certain depreciatory remarks which schoolboys of all ranks are prone to indulge in. "Oh my eyes, do look at his feathers—he must have been picking a goose!" "I wonder whether that is a real leopard's skin, or only a railway rug!" and "I'll take half-a-crown to sixpence that the lions finish him off." Mr. Tredgold's voice, too, was distinguishable with its encouraging "Brayvo, Brayvo!" and there was a delicate clapping of kid gloves from the vicinity of the court circle that should have nerved the heart of any man who entertained a proper appreciation of the approval of the best Circles. All that Dick heard, however, was a clear

sweet voice repeating the same words which had been spoken to him in a garden arbour years ago: "I believe you, dear; I trust in you. I am sure, dear Dick, that all will yet be well and happy with us in the end."

Then, in a moment, all that he became conscious of was that he was among seven lions with an iron gate fastened between him and his fellow-men, and that it behoved him, if he would save his life, to feel no fear of losing it. They were all roaring in chorus—which was so far well, he knew—and parted to left and right before his whip-lash, just as they had done before that of Tickey-rocanua of old. The largest of the lions alone seemed to have any doubt of his identity with that chieftain, and stared at him with a pertinacity which is considered in polite society to be rudeness, unless when mitigated by the medium of an opera-glass. Him, therefore, Dick seized by the mane, and set on his hind-legs at once, with forepaws resting upon his own breast, that he might enjoy a nearer view of his countenance, and be satisfied that it meant Authority and nothing less. The *pose* was magnificent, and drew down a thunder of applause; which, when Dick pitched the Monarch of the Forest backwards, was renewed till the courtyard rang with it. It was somewhat rough usage of his majesty; but Dick's predecessor had always done it, and he judged it safest to adhere implicitly to precedent and the programme. He next compelled the same animal, who, it is probable, began to regret his manifestation of incredulity, to take the initiative in leaping through the little hoop, an example which the others obediently followed. Then he persuaded the two lionesses to mount their limited shelves, and form the background of that much admired *tableau*, "The Lion Hunter reclining after the Chase;" after which, by what had always appeared to Dick a singular

inversion of dramatic arrangement, but which it would have been probably destruction to have just then amended, followed the Chase itself. This was the most fatiguing, as well as perilous part of the whole performance. Dick had need of all his strength, as well as his courage, to receive each of the seven mighty creatures, as with open mouths they leaped in quick succession over him. He had to shift his shoulder with extreme rapidity, lest, thickly protected though it was, the claws of each temporary occupant should strike into his flesh ; and to draw his face back with a jerk as they left its neighbourhood, lest the snap of their retreating jaws should bereave it of some prominent feature. Their fiery eyes flashed on him as they passed, like sparks from flint and steel, their hot breath scorched him as with a furnace-blast, and he was glad enough when the third revolution of lions was completed, and his panting breast and bruised left shoulder ceased to be its axis. It was a relief to him indeed to see that family of seven crowding together in one corner of the apartment, and cursing him in their voluminous lion-language, while he discharged his bulletless carbine among them as the victorious hunter of the African plains. Never had the original Tickerocandua acquitted himself with more complete success than Dick did, nor received from any audience a more enthusiastic shout of approbation. Arrived in his own caravan, he found Mr. Tredgold awaiting him, flown away from the presence of royalty itself, to convey his congratulations in person.

“I could not help telling them, Dick, when I saw you getting on so well and pleasantly, that it was only your first trial, and that, in consequence of an accident, you were filling a friend’s place among them creeturs. The whisper passed up to her Majesty herself, I do believe,

and you might have heard them Eton chaps a-cheering beyond King George's monument."

The whole company—represented in the person of Mr. Mopes—expressed their delight and congratulations upon the young fellow's successful achievement. "But do," observed that gentleman, "just take a glass of brandy, for you look as pale as death."

Dick resolutely shook his head as he replied: "No, my friend; the worst part of the business is still to be got over; and even if it were not so, as long as I hold this post, no drop of spirits shall ever cross these lips."

He drank Mr. Mopes's health in a glass of water, who straightway betook himself to his elephants, who were about to exhibit their classical attitudes.

There was a knock at the door, and in came Mr. Bairman, cringing.

"I congratulate you, young man; it was a grand experiment, and has had a most fortunate termination. Permit me to shake you by the hand."

The invitation was not a welcome one to Dick, but he was not in a humour just then to reject the friendly advances of any man. As he still held the glass, however, which was not yet empty, he offered his left hand, which the other wrung with great heartiness.

"But you are not out of the wood yet, Arbour," grinned the butcher. "You must be very careful with Semiramis."

An execration burst from the lips of Dick in spite of himself. "You malicious fool, do you suppose I have not calculated my chances, or wish to be reminded of my peril?"

He spoke so wrathfully that Bairman, who was far more mean and cowardly than any animal ever caged, absolutely shivered. "I meant nothing, my brave young man,

except to warn you. You are so audacious, you are so venturesome. I thought I would offer you a little piece of prudent advice."

Through the abject speech of the man, there glowed a lurid fire of sardonic hate, which he seemed in vain to strive to hide.

"I do not need your advice, Mr. Bairman, and certainly not your sympathy. I saw you looking on when poor Robinson perished, and your face did not wear one grain of human pity in it. Go to your slaughter-house, Sir ; you are a cruel coward—go."

"Ay, youngster," replied the butcher menacingly, but taking care to lay his hand upon the door-handle, "and go you, too, to *your* slaughter-house. There are two men who have met their deaths in that den already, and Semiramis only waits for——"

What Semiramis waited for the speaker was not permitted to declare, for at that identical moment Dick caught the centre of gravity of Mr. Bairman's retreating body with the toe of his right jack-boot, and caused him to describe a parabola in the air instead of completing his unpleasant prophecy in the caravan. Descending with considerable violence upon the trunk of Ninus, who just then, luckily for him, chanced to be in an inverted attitude, that animal resented the concussion by pouring through the injured member such a vast quantity of dirty water—of which he always kept a large stock on draught for offensive purposes—as took away what little breath the discomfited butcher had got left in him ; and there he lay in the arena, like a log, for several minutes, until carried to hospital, quite unexhilarated by the applause which was showered upon him by the youthful spectators, to whom his eccentric and comet-like entrance appeared but as a part of the performance.

The elephantine gymnastics being over, Dick sallied forth to conclude what had, up to this point, been a most satisfactory exhibition. He opened that cage-door which last swung back upon its hinges that Tickerocandua's corpse might be borne through it, amid a total silence ; for it had got about that this was his most difficult ordeal, and that the accident upon the previous day—the fatal extent of which was as yet unknown to the public—had taken place in this very den.

The lion was, as usual, dozing, with his great head resting upon his forepaws ; the tigress, too, as usual, was pacing restlessly up and down the narrow space, at one time taking her feline privilege of looking at majesty —for if a cat may look at a queen, how much more may a tigress — at another, regarding a small but plump Etonian, who stood temptingly near the bars, much as he himself would regard a cherry. They would neither of them have made two bites at their respective delicacies.

“Stop !” thundered Dick, smiting her ladyship across her whiskers with his whip ; and she stopped accordingly, though her tail made up for its vertical cessation by increased lateral activity.

“Jump !” and she jumped at once through that double hoop, the offer of which had cost Tickerocandua his life. The whole drama, as rehearsed so often within the last three days, was acted, in short, to admiration by all three performers. The very tableau itself of the Royal Arms, with the tigress instead of the unicorn, was attained with perfect success. At that instant, while the Hunter stood between the two — with Semiramis upon his left—the tigress showed her teeth ; “grinned without laughing,” as it was afterwards graphically described by the plump Etonian. Then she actually kissed Dick’s hand as her

lawful lord and master. With the swiftness of lightning, he corrected her for that liberty with a tap from the butt-end of his whip, and she crouched down at once upon the floor like one reproved. Then Dick made his bow amid a thousand vivats, and leaving the lion, rampant, sauntered carelessly, almost disrespectfully, out of the cage, with his left hand in his breeches pocket; ascended the steps of his own caravan, let himself in—and fainted. There was an awful gash in that hidden left hand of his where the teeth of the tigress had met through the living flesh.

“I will have that cursed creature shot before I sleep this night,” quoth Mr. Tredgold furiously, as he sat with the doctor beside the wounded man.

“You needn’t trouble yourself, Sir,” returned Dick quietly; “for she is dead already.”

That swift little tap upon the nose had indeed put an end to the proud Semiramis.

“There was other blood beside mine upon this hand!” continued Dick gravely: “I saw it there when it was too late. Bairman shook hands with me with his fingers reeking from the butcher’s shop before I entered the cage. That was what made the poor brute bite me, for the smell of such blood always drives the poor creatures to madness. If I had given my right hand to him instead of my left, I should not be now alive to say so.”

“Not on purpose, surely!” cried Mr. Tredgold, with a shudder; “the man could never have done such a murderous, such a fiendish deed as that!”

“Ay, but he did, Sir,” responded Dick in a terrible voice, and with that fearsome night with the lioness in his recollection; “nor is it the first time that he has played with a man’s life in that fashion.”

“He is no servant of mine henceforth,” exclaimed the

horrified proprietor. "You shall never set eyes on him again, I promise you."

"Where is he?" inquired the wounded man with sternness. "It is not right that he should have planned two murders, and yet escape scathless."

"He is in hospital," returned the doctor, "and by no means scathless, if he be the man who had that fall among the elephants. He has his collar-bone and three ribs broken."

"I have not given such a good kick," observed Dick thankfully, "since I played at football at Messrs. Dot and Carriwun's. Thank you, doctor; I think I shall be able to go to sleep now with a mind at ease."





CHAPTER XXXI.

PROFESSIONAL.

THE burning though negative shame which attaches to all Scapegraces, and especially distinguishes them from the good young men of their own generation, was now at least removed in the case of Richard Arbour. Dick did belong to a profession. No friend of his father—well-to-do, apoplectic, and severe—could meet him now and ask “What he was doing for himself,” with the previous knowledge in his respectable but malicious mind that he was doing nothing. We do remember in that epoch of our own hot youth, when, to the great scandal of our friends, we shrank from Law, and Physic, and Divinity, the dreadful trade of Arms, and the still less unmitigated horrors of a Naval life, and preferred to compose the most rejectable papers for the periodicals, how we ourselves were worried by such inquisitors. They were always persons who professed to have entertained a friendship for our deceased parent, but who did not extend that privilege—except in the thinnest and most theoretic form—to ourselves. They neither lent nor left us money. They confined themselves entirely to inquiring what we intended to do for ourselves, with the sole object of seeing us blush and stammer, and reply that at present we had no settled prospects whatever. Goaded to madness on one occasion by a perse-

cutor of this kind—a predenary of a cathedral, whose own office, by-the-bye, was a total sinecure—we replied that our walk in life was (with many thanks to him for his obliging interest in our fortunes) thoroughly chalked out for us, and that the name of it—was tight-rope dancing. With equal force, and greater truth, Dick might have now staggered any such questioner by the reply that his was “lion-taming.”

As soon as his hand got well, he was formally installed into the office and emoluments of the departed Tickerocandua. The death of Semiramis—although that lady was valued by her proprietor at upwards of two hundred pounds—was at once forgiven him, and the more cheerfully, perhaps, because the coroner’s jury at the inquest upon poor Robinson had expressed their conviction that so sanguinary an animal ought to be at once destroyed. Mr. Tredgold sent his politest compliments to the foreman, and begged to assure him that the creature *had* been destroyed within four-and-twenty hours of the fatal occurrence; and in return the proprietor received the eulogiums of the county press for his ready sacrifice of his private interests to the general good of the human species.

“My dear Arbour,” observed Mr. Tredgold, some little time after the exhibition at the castle, but with the gracious expressions of royal approval yet ringing in his ears—“I trust you will never be dissevered from the establishment of Tredgold, late Trimming. I hope this golden beginning may be the earnest to you of a prolonged career of successful experiments.”

Dick replied that he hoped that also; albeit with some little insincerity, for the teaching of hoop-jumping to the *felinæ* is not exactly an employment for extreme old age, nor what a sanguine mind looks forward to as the end

and crown of existence. Moreover, his Lucy might scarcely like the peripatetic character of such a domicile as the caravan, even if the Earthwoman (which did not seem probable) should turn out to be a sisterly and agreeable person to share a home with.

“I am perfectly satisfied with you, Dick, perfectly satisfied,” continued the proprietor, but at the same time casting a wistful look at the object of so complete an eulogy, “only there are some bills here that I should like you to look at and say you would not mind.”

“To look at them and say I wouldn’t mind,” replied Dick, “well, that sounds easy enough, I’m sure. But as to putting my name to the back of them—if that is what you want—why, you must be aware, Mr. Tredgold, that I am a mere man of straw——”

“Why, bless my life, Dick, it’s the posting-bills *I* mean. You see, there is something in a name, whatever the poet says to the contrary. Now, Arbour *aint* a name; or leastways, not a name for a blank wall in a leading thoroughfare. Robinson was the same, poor fellow. Robinson would never have done for a draw for the general public. Robinson the Invincible would have sounded next kin to nonsense. The Lion-hunter of Central Africa ought to have a title, as it were, suitable to that locality, eh? Now, don’t you think so? Richard Arbour—you will excuse my freedom, Dick—is rather a foolish name. It don’t stir your blood, like, when you see it printed, no matter how big one gets the type.”

Dick was compelled to admit that, so far as he knew, the appearance of his family name was not calculated to have an exhilarating effect upon the public.

“Exactly,” continued Mr. Tredgold; “I knew you couldn’t defend it for a moment. Now, just look at this.” He unrolled a posting-bill of the most gigantic

proportions. "Here's a conception for you! Here's a hit, although I says it as shouldn't say it, which, in the present juncture of circumstances, will be worth its weight in gold :

ARBORINO THE INVINCIBLE !!!!!!!

If the space would have admitted of them, we would have had half a hundred notes of admiration instead of eleven. You can't read it, perhaps, at this short distance ; that's the beauty of it. The public will have to retire half a mile off, in order to take all the letters in. That will be one of the great attractions. All the people walking backwards away from the wall in order to learn what it is all about. The principal thoroughfares will be impeded ; the police will interfere ; the thing will get into the papers. Arborino the Invincible will be advertised, for nothing, through the length and breadth of the land. You're a devilish lucky fellow, Dick. I congratulate you."

It was with a rueful countenance that Dick eyed the shapeless rainbow of print—for every letter was a different colour—and vainly endeavoured to decipher his new and magnificent title.

"You don't *mind?*" expostulated Mr. Tredgold earnestly. "I'm sure you are not the man to let the establishment suffer just for want of a couple of syllables."

"No, I don't mind much, Mr. Tredgold."

And from that moment, to the world at large, our Dick was known as Arborino. He became not only lion-hunter to the establishment, but presiding genius ; director, prime-minister, and factotum of the proprietor himself. In consequence of his skilful care, far fewer animals died

during the winters than had been lost before. Beasts of the highest value were purchased and parted with at a word of advice from him. When, in course of time he asked of Mr. Tredgold that a certain percentage of the increased profits, derived directly from these services—and exclusive of the taming department—should be allotted to him, it was granted with a readiness that made him regret, perhaps, the modesty of his demand. His wants were few, his expenses trifling, and he had reasons of his own for saving money. It was no wonder, therefore, that he soon possessed a considerable sum in hand. Mr. Tredgold's returns were large, but he was sometimes glad of a little ready cash, and Dick's was always at his disposal, for a consideration. With all this prosperity, it was creditable to the young man that hard word did not grow hateful to him, or, at all events, that he was never known to shirk it. He was always ready to go through the dangerous drudgery of the lion-hunt to the minute, nor had Mr. Mopes once to spin out his lecture upon natural history because Arborino lingered in his caravan. Unless, indeed, business is to be considered a thing inseparably connected with folded papers, red tape, ugly waferstamps, mustiness, spectacles, and suspicion, the Family Scapegrace was turning out to be a very excellent business man.

The last duty—though Dick little knew it was to be the last—which fell to his lot while in Mr. Tredgold's establishment, was one that the majority even of lion-tamers might have hesitated to perform, without disgrace, and which still fewer persons, with money in their purses, and the means of enjoying life, would have undertaken.

The time was autumn, and the village where the establishment was remaining for a night was not very

far from that same Salterleigh, in Devonshire, where Dick had made his first acquaintance with it. The exhibition had long been closed, and night and earliest morning were competing in that hopeless struggle which the former still maintains in spite of so protracted an experience, when Dick was aroused from the heavy sleep which always weighed down his eyelids upon Saturday nights, by the Earthman ejaculating his usual formulæ with unwonted animation, and pressing upon him, by unmistakable signs, the loan of his bow and arrows. Dick declined the weapons, but was endeavouring to decipher his meaning, when in rushed Mr. Mopes, head foremost, with the startling information that the lions were out and the devil was to pay.

“What lions?” inquired Dick.

“All of ‘em,” returned the natural history professor. “They’re a-wandering about the town as common as cats.”

Without waiting to attire himself completely, but rather taking the Earthman for his model in that respect, Dick was out of the caravan and in front of his cages within the minute.

“All the lions” that were “about the town,” or elsewhere, were at once reduced by his personal inspection to two—Ajax, and another who had been put in the place of the defunct Semiramis. They had gnawed their way through the floor—the only portion of their apartment that was not sheathed with iron—like a couple of Baron Trencks, and were out for the night on some pleasant Devonshire ramble. In such a case, it was not likely that Mr. Tredgold would be very useful, and, indeed, upon being informed, from without, of what had occurred, that gentleman immediately rolled himself up, in his bedclothes, after the manner of a hedgehog, and so

remained in a torpor of terror; while his lady-wife, no less terrified, but thus left insufficiently provided with the same means of concealment, shut herself up, erect, in a cupboard.

Neither would Mr. Mopes move in the matter, nor the Earthman—who was the favourite food of lions in his own country—nor any other person in the establishment. So long as the beasts were in their natural and proper places—namely, their cages—argued the first gentleman, he, for his part, was ready to attend to them; but since they had escaped therefrom into the world at large, they had placed themselves out of his jurisdiction: the matter resolved itself into a case of lion-hunting, wherein it was clear that lion-hunters were alone concerned. An inhabitant of the village who kept late hours had met the two animals in question—whom terror and his previous potations had magnified to eight—trotting tranquilly down the little High Street, and had started off at considerable speed, and in the reverse direction to that in which he had been previously going, to inform Mr. Mopes, with the whereabouts of whose lodging he happened to be acquainted. The Earthman had heard and interpreted aright the cry of exultation that Ajax had indulged himself in upon setting his foot on the land of freedom.

This was all the information that Dick could glean, before he started, with a couple of long strong cords about his middle, in pursuit of the formidable truants.

Early as it was, the news had already percolated through a great part of the village, the inhabitants of which, in every variety of undress, were at their upper windows beseeching Dick to take away the lions out of their land, just as the knight-errants of old were importuned in the case of dragons and other devastating

monsters. Upon his part, Dick besought the good folks, with some superfluousness, to remain within doors, and on no account to anger the creatures by missiles, or otherwise, if they chanced to return that way. The door of only one cottage was open—left so on the previous evening in consequence of the autumnal heat—wherein a bedridden old woman lay complaining that two of the biggest dogs she had ever seen had just been in and chased away her favourite black cat.

“Are you quite sure they were not lions?” inquired Dick with anxiety.

“Gad a mercy,” exclaimed the old woman, “I dunno what they was; but I’ll have the law on thee if thou belongest to them, and they have harmed my black cat.”

Ajax and his companion had indeed begun their holiday by giving chase to this insignificant animal, who had fled from her far-away and gigantic kindred into a neighbouring corn-field. Dick perceived the two pursuers leaping up, ever and anon, above the standing crop, and the ripple of the corn over their heads as they dashed along as through their native jungles. He had a difficulty just twice as great as that of Samson’s before him, but one to be overcome less by the strength of Samson than by the cunning of Delilah. He had not even his trusty whip with him; but only a heart full of courage and a handful of cords. As soon as the lions saw him, they came springing and bounding over the tall ears towards him, as though they would say: “Here we are! Aint it jolly? Aint it prime? We’ll have no more of that cage-work—any of us—will we? How glad we are that you take a similar view of the matter, and have come out to play with us.”

Then Dick lay down, and the unsuspecting lions with him, and having treacherously fastened the two cords to

each of their four legs, respectively, he pulled them sharply together, and knotted the cords, whereby the majestic creatures were securely "hobbled." Then Mr. Mopes and other brave men came with flat boards, whereupon the hampered beasts were strongly bound, and so, borne shoulder-high, though not altogether in triumph, back to their apartment, which was already securely refloored for their reception.

Everybody was enthusiastic about Dick's courageous conduct, the very parish-clerk of the place being moved to confess that no similar feat had been performed in that neighbourhood for a series of years. Mr. Tredgold's gratitude was as overpowering as his previous fears had been, and he offered a quarter-share of his proprietorship to Dick on the spot, before breakfast. Everything that morning, in short, seemed to point to the young man's becoming the king of lion-tamers, and enjoying a prolonged and glorious reign—until the post came in with a letter for him.

How often, at some apparently crowning point, does a change occur in men's fortunes! How often, at short whist, with all the honours in one's hand, and, as it seems, the game, a "cross ruff" or some other unexpected invention of the enemy gives them their one thing needful, the odd trick—for the enemy, that is to say the chances of life against us, are always "at four." And then how we blindly rail at the less blind Fortuna, who is doing her very best, perhaps, for us after all, and is only taking the first game away that we may win the succeeding two and the long odds!

There would have been much repining in Dick's heart upon the receipt of this missive, on account of the *mal-à-propos* time at which it called him away from the menagerie, had it not brought a far deeper sorrow with

it—an apprehension for the life of her for whom alone he toiled and lived—which overwhelmed all other thoughts. The letter ran thus:—

“ DEAREST DICK—We want you here—at once—immediately. There is one in this house, sick even unto death, perhaps, for whom (if I know you) you would sacrifice your right hand if it could smooth the pillow better than another’s; *as it can.*—Your loving

“ MAGGIE.”

This epistle was dated from the house of Mr. Mickleham, and left no doubt in Dick’s own mind as to the identity of the person of whom his sister wrote so urgently. His beloved Lucy must indeed have been very ill to have excused Maggie for leaving her uncle, who in these last days could scarcely bear to let her out of his sight. He knew this by previous letters both from Maggie and Lucy, who had kept him informed, too, of the influence which Mr. Frederick Charlecot exercised over the house, as well as of his marriage with Maria, which had taken place some few months back. But of late there had been a long and unwonted pause in their correspondence. In a tumult of apprehension, Dick packed a few clothes together, concluded certain business arrangements with his proprietor, and was off in a gig to the nearest railway station to catch the Sunday mail. How long seemed that iron way! How tardy the flight of that “resonant steam eagle,” which bore him, though it sped over valley and river, and dashed through rock and hill as bird could never do! When the train was exchanged for the cab, his impatience grew to fever-heat; he passed that portion of the journey half inside the vehicle, half out of the window, exhorting the coachman to drive fast, and yet, when the well-known

house—dearest to him of all dwellings—was in view, he durst not look at it; for fear—as upon that awful morning in Golden Square—he should find that Death had been before him.

Ere the cabman could ring, however, Maggie had opened the door, and kissing him fondly, whispered the answer to that question which he dared not put. “Yes, dearest, you are in time, thank Heaven. But you must be prepared for a great change. Will you see any one else first, or go at once—”

“At once, at once,” cried Dick, impatiently, and was hurrying up stairs to what had formerly been his dear Lucy’s chamber, when Maggie called him back.

“Nay, this way, brother,” said she, opening softly a door on the hall-floor; “our invalid is here.”

The spare room had been made the sick-room, and, in its ample bed, there lay, propped up by pillows, and weak, and wan, and white, the scarcely recognisable form of Uncle Ingram.





CHAPTER XXXII.

RECONCILED.

For an instant the deep shadow of sorrow flitted from the young man's brow, and his breath was drawn more lightly, because his beloved one was safe and well, and another, where he had looked for her, was sick, it was for an instant only. Nothing but tender and eager pity was to be read on Richard Arbour's features after that first surprise.

The spectacle before him might well indeed have moved a harder heart that had been more deeply wronged. Those firm, gray, flint-like eyes, wherefrom the impatient fire had often flashed, but from which no tear had been ever seen to fall, were now dull and filmy ; the cheeks were ghastly and sunk ; the large hands lay outside the counterpane, gaunt, thin, and motionless. An awful smile distorted one half of the face ; the other was all that was now left to represent the man, whose every muscle and lineament had been wont to play their part in setting forth the energy and strength within. By the bedside sat Mr. Mickleham, haggard and pale too, with an anxious solicitude in his gaze that gave place to a sorrowful smile of welcome to Dick, and then returned intenser yet, as though he reproached himself for even that momentary oblivion of his stricken friend and master.

“You see he is not here,” murmured the sick man peevishly, with his eyes fixed upon the new comer. “I knew he wouldn’t be: he never *would* do what he was told; and why should he, now that I am a beggar?”

The great strong-bearded man who had quelled lions, fell down upon his knees beside the bed, and asked forgiveness, from this powerless, half-childish fellow-creature, for all the ungrateful wilfulness and disobedience that he had shown towards him during his past life.

“Is this my Nephew Richard? Can it be Dick?” asked the old man with a quavering voice. “Wipe my eyes, William; the sun gets to them through the blind. Please to wipe my eyes.” And indeed there were no dry eyes in the room when Uncle Ingram spoke those words.

“I can’t shake hands with you, Dick—I am a little weak from my late illness—but I forgive you all. You shouldn’t have put the stone in the snowball, you know; you must see that now, I’m sure: I hope Dempsey is going on well.” That name had not been mentioned in the Arbour family for more than ten years past, nor had it perhaps ever passed the old merchant’s lips before. “But, then,” continued he, apologetically, “that was nothing like the shame to the house. In all the papers, I dare say, by this time, is it not, William?”

The two male auditors were of opinion that the sick man was referring to the charge brought long ago against Dick in the case of Count Gotsuchakoff: but Maggie made a hasty gesture of silence, and answered for Mr. Mickleham: “Yes, uncle.” She divined that he was contrasting in his mind the respective behaviours of Richard and Adolphus, and that his speech referred to a much later calamity, the suddenness of which had

brought on paralysis, and reduced him to his present pitiable condition.

“You know all about it, I suppose, Dick,” he went on ; “you must have heard it wherever you were. We are all beggars together now. I’m in the workhouse ; this is the doctor ; that is the nurse. I have nothing to complain of, however—nothing. What right has a pauper got to complain of anything ? That is what I have always said. Adolphus plotted it all—all : he and his friend Mr. Ch-Ch-Ch ——”

“Dearest uncle,” whispered Maggie, “try and sleep a little : you are exciting yourself about things that are all past and gone.”

“I like to talk to Dick,” replied the sick man, drowsily, “though he does wear a beard like Mr. Ch-Ch-Ch ——”

The old man fell into one of those heavy slumbers, that are more like Death than Repose, in a vain endeavour to articulate the name of the man who had ruined him.

The house of Arbour had fallen with a tremendous crash, and there had been nothing saved for the owner out of the ruins. The liabilities of the firm might perhaps be met, but that was all that could be reasonably hoped for. The mighty snowball which Mr. Ingram Arbour had toilsomely pushed before him, increasing with its every revolution, up the long hill of life, had escaped his fingers, and rolled to the bottom broken in a thousand pieces. He was well aware that that Sisyphean labour was not such as could be undertaken anew at seventy-four, and the sudden consciousness of his helplessness had been too much for his already enfeebled frame. Mr. Mickleham’s house (for his own was inhabited at present by those become hateful to him) had been thrown open to him at once, as home and

hospital, but that gentleman's affairs, of course, were themselves stricken by the same blow which had ruined his employer.

“I am poor enough for you now, dearest Dick,” sobbed Lucy Mickleham, in the course of a charming interview which took place on his leaving his uncle's chamber: “you needn't complain any more of my being so rich. My face is my fortune, like the poor little milkmaid's in the song I used to sing to you, and that's not half so plump nor so well worth looking at as it was—is it? Did you ever see such eyes?”

She pointed with a fairy finger to the long lashes plentifully drenched with dew, and Dick replied, “Never,” with enthusiasm.

“We must all work now, as you do, Dick, and not be proud any more. Willy wants to do it all himself, dear fellow; but I, for one, don't mean to let him. I can get seven-and-sixpence a piece for hand-screens of my own painting, such as this, at a shop I know of, and they *don't* cost me seven-and-threepence to begin with, as he pretends they do.”

It was a pretty screen, representing the usual umbrageous landscape, but in the background there was a hermit's cell, which Dick's eye rapturously recognised as the idealised presentment of that garden bower which had witnessed their last parting.

“That is mine,” cried he; “I will give four hundred pounds for it; that is mine for evermore;” and he seized the banner, albeit her little hand defended it gallantly, and only surrendered it under the dread compulsion of a kiss. It was a long price to offer for the article, and one certainly much above its market value, but Dick considered the very struggle to obtain possession cheap at the money.

"There," cried he, gaily, "we have now got something to furnish with. One cannot make a beginning too soon ; although, dearest Lucy"—and his voice sank, and his look lost its brightness as he said it—"although there is many a weary year, I fear, lying between you and me."

Lucy did not answer in words, but her face, with the sudden cloud upon it, and the raindrops gathering, spoke for her, saying : "Alas, and is this true, love ? I thought that since we were both so poor, we might both be happy."

It was a terrible trial to Dick to have to tell her how far asunder they were yet ; but he did tell her all, for he knew that she had a heart as brave as loving ; how that, even as matters had stood before, it was impossible that they could have married until he had put by money enough to do so, independently of his present profession, or had attained such a partnership in Mr. Tredgold's establishment as should do away with the necessity of the hazard of life and limb. She shuddered even to hear him talk of that. Then what, reasoned he, would be her anxiety to see him encountering such apparent perils—for, in reality, there was little danger, he said—daily, nay, hourly ? Moreover, even if her father and brother should have consented to it, Dick himself, he owned, would no more have permitted wife of his to have accompanied the menagerie in its peregrinations, than would the Archbishops of York or Canterbury. *Now*, it would be mere weakness to conceal from themselves, affairs were even in a still less hopeful position. Besides their own necessities, it now devolved upon him to supply those of sick and ruined Uncle Ingram——

"Dearest Dick," assented Lucy softly, with quite a radiance of approval shining, rainbow-like, in her tearful eyes.

“And Maggie, too, our own dear, darling Maggie,” added Dick; “for well I know that you would scorn to think of me, did I dream of happiness while Maggie was within the reach of the cold hand of Want.”

“Dearest Dick,” sobbed Lucy once again, partly because she approved of his sentiments, and partly because she took a great satisfaction in the mere utterance of that couple of words.

Maggie’s arms were round her as she spoke, or at least one of her arms, the other being in the custody of William Mickleham the younger, who accompanied her.

“I beg your pardon, brother, for eaves-dropping,” observed that gentleman laughing, “but we only heard that concluding sentence of yours which concerned ourselves. It is very pleasant to be spoken of in that fashion by friends behind one’s back, and therefore Maggie cries about it. Lucy and she always cry whenever they are very much pleased. It’s a part of the contrariness of their feminine natures. But Dick, my boy, you see you must leave your sister out of these kind calculations of yours. She and I are one, or shall be so in a little time, I trust; and I have always had an excellent knack of providing for Number 1. Thank Heaven, too, we shall have something over, not only for our dear father, but for others also. Let us two, however, form ourselves at once into a committee of Ways and Means, if at least Lucy can spare you. She has only been talking to you two hours and a half at present, so it is scarcely to be expected that she can have communicated half her sentiments.”

“We have scarcely been half an hour!” exclaimed Lucy with virtuous indignation.

There was a tell-tale clock in the room, so that even

Maggie herself was obliged to join in the mirth excited by this audacious statement.

“Well, I am sure that you and Willy,” retorted Lucy, commencing that line of defence denominated the *tu quoque*, “are often hours and hours ——”

“By-the-bye, I have quite forgotten Uncle Ingram’s lemonade!” exclaimed his niece precipitately, as she ran out of the room, pursued, in her turn, by the laughter of the company.

“Of all the people who ever lived in a glass-house, Willy,” continued his sister, “and yet persisted in throwing stones——”

“My dear Lucy,” interrupted her brother, pityingly, “I am neither a melon nor a cucumber, and I live at Somerset House. Nobody knows what you mean, nor whom you are talking about. You will find her an excellent young person, doubtless, Dick, but flighty—certainly what you call flighty. With regard to business matters, however, since she is determined to remain here and be present at our conference, she had better be the first to give in her schedule of available capital. Item, a handscreen——”

“Willy, be quiet!” ejaculated Lucy, upon tiptoe, and endeavouring to close his provoking mouth with her little hand.

“A screen painted half in oil and half in water-colours—for she was crying——”

“Ah, story-teller, what fibs!—what wicked fibs!”

“Crying all the time she was at it, just as though she had been working at an onion! and it’s exceedingly like—only the scene is in Brittany, she says—the tool-house in our back-garden, where she and you, I believe——”

Here Lucy set up a scream of positive terror, and putting her fingers into her ears, ran off, as Maggie had

done before her, scarlet, and left the two bread-winners to their conference upon Ways and Means.

“The failure of the house is as bad as bad can be, Dick,” began William gravely, “and we may just as well look upon it as though it had never existed. Now, tell me at once, my dear fellow—in order that we may clearly see our way—how much, if anything, can you calculate upon contributing to the common stock per annum? How much do you now make a-year, with your bear and your hurdy-gurdy?”

“Just now, and in my improved position, the profits of which are only just commencing,” replied Dick, modestly, “I have something over three hundred a-year. I think, indeed—for my own expenses, living as I do in a house on wheels, are next to nothing—that I can easily spare that sum.”

“The deuce you can!” exclaimed the government clerk, in a tone of sublime astonishment. “Then all I have to say, Dick, is, do you happen to have a vacancy in your establishment? It is true that my own income is double yours, but then it has taken me five times the number of years to earn it.”

“I don’t think you would quite like my mode of life,” returned Dick, smiling, as he pictured to himself, this scrupulously attired and rather self-complacent official amid the whirl of the lion-hunt. “It would doubtless be as strange to you as Somerset House would be to me.”

“Dick,” replied Mr. William Mickleham solemnly, “you are an impostor and a humbug. You have misled the World—you *almost* misled *me*—to consider you a half-dast ne’er-do-weel, whereas—— By-the-bye, have you got any ready money in your possession, Dick?”

(“I am not sure,” whispered the government clerk to himself, “that this isn’t all moonshine after all.”)

Dick drew out of his small carpet bag a bunch of enormous keys, a tolerably large bale of tobacco, a prospectus of his own performances for that evening at Plymouth, a drenching horn, and a banker's book.

His future brother-in-law watched the appearance of these various articles with an interest unmixed with wonder, until his eyes lit upon the last.

"I should have been less astonished," murmured he aloud, "if I had seen the fellow with the Bible itself."

"I always do carry a Bible," said Dick simply, producing his mother's gift, and adding the volume to the heterogeneous assemblage upon the table.

"Please to draw a cheque," observed Mr. William Mickleham; "do: when you have done that, the thing will have reached its climax. I am in a dream at present. It is the transformation scene of a pantomime, only reversed. You *were* the clown; you *are*— Why, what's this for—these cheques for six and for four hundred pounds?"

"The one is for Uncle Ingram; for that money he sent to me was never mine, but lies to my account at his banker's. The other is for value received," replied Dick. "It belongs to Lucy properly, but now it's yours, as her share and that of my uncle of the common expenses, past and future, of the household. I settled accounts with Tredgold yesterday, before I came away, and this was the balance in my favour."

The unegotistic simplicity with which Dick gave this hopeful schedule of his pecuniary affairs, and the entire absence of any consciousness that he was doing more than what was perfectly just and reasonable, filled the government clerk with an admiration that he rarely allowed himself to entertain for any man save one.

"Do you know, Dick, that I consider you one of the

finest fellows with whom I have ever had the honour of shaking hands?"

"Ah, but you should see me with my crown of feathers and my leopard's skin," returned the beast-tamer, laughing bitterly; "then I'm fine indeed."

"It will be better when we can dispense with those ornaments, certainly," answered the other; "although, indeed, they are no more to be ashamed of than the ermine of the judge or the lawn of the bishop. Even wisdom and piety must needs wear trappings to dazzle the crowd in this world."

"Thank you, brother," replied Dick sadly, "for trying, for my sake, to persuade yourself of that. I cannot persuade *myself* of it. My dear Lucy knows the worst, thank Heaven, and is content to bide her time for me. But it's a dreadful thing, William, to be the Scapegrace of a family, after all."

The young man covered his swarthy face with his hands and groaned aloud.

The government clerk, who would never have suffered his own feelings to have thus exhibited themselves in another's presence, was almost as much scandalised as touched.

"Take some water, Dick; take some brandy and water, my good fellow. Take a turn in the garden—think of something else, if you can. Why, there's a letter for you—a letter from France—which arrived this very morning an hour before yourself, only we forgot to give it to you."

"Yes," replied Dick, recovering himself, and breaking the seal, "I know who it comes from" (for he forgot that no letter upon business could have possibly reached his present address); "it's from the *Jardin des Plantes*, about the exchange of a giraffe for—Gracious Heaven! where is my dearest Lucy?"

“In the dining-room, in your uncle’s room, out in the tool-house—what does it matter where she is?—you can tell *me* your news, I suppose, in the meantime. Have they elected you Emperor of the French by universal suffrage? *I* shouldn’t wonder. What is it, Dick?”

“It’s for Lucy first,” cried Dick, in accents half choked with emotion; “it’s for Lucy and Maggie first; and no ears shall hear it before theirs.”





CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BEGINNING OF A HONEYMOON.

AHAVE spoken of the old merchant's undone work as Sisyphean, and indeed the great house of Arbour had fallen much as a huge stone is toppled from the summit of a hill. There was a brief period of indecision, when it rocked, and hung, and hesitated upon the brink of the steep, and then down it went, "knicketty knock," like the pebble in Carisbrooke Well. It was a case of Crisis, Crash, Crash, Crash, and Company, from the moment that Mr. Adolphus and his ingenious friend got the chief management of the concern into their own hands. One thing only had too confiding Uncle Ingram stickled for before that happened; he had insisted that the highly connected and desirable Mr. Charlecot should, before taking any active part in the business, espouse the mature Maria: perhaps from a shadow of suspicion that even a gentleman of his sagacity and disinterestedness might need a family tie at once to steady and to stimulate him; or perhaps from that last weakness of commercial, as well as other minds, which derives satisfaction from being connected with aristocracy. The wedding, which took place at Rose Cottage, was, by the express desire of the bridegroom, as quiet and yet solid an affair as though he had been a German sovereign contracting a morganatic marriage. He was, he said, ashamed to confess that it would be useless to invite his

high-born but prejudiced relatives to that interesting ceremony ; that the Faubourg St. Germain must needs be separated for the present from Darkendim Street by an impassable gulf, although he did not despair of one day carrying his wife in triumph to the ancestral arms—a merchant princess, whom it would be as absurd to confound with vulgar trade, as to mix up the earls of Zetland or Balcarres with the small-coal line.

On the morning of the marriage, Uncle Ingram bestowed a splendid trousseau, and the promise of ten thousand pounds after his death, upon Maria, but only her own portion of six hundred pounds for the present. The airy mirth with which Mr. Frederick Charlecot received that bagatelle of a cheque would have been worth twice the money to an actor of genteel comedy. He crumpled it up, and thrust it into an outside pocket, as though it had been driving-gloves, to the great scandal of his future uncle, and the absolute terror of Mr. John Arbour, attorney-at-law, whose sympathies were easily excited at the prospect of anybody's losing money, one shilling of which might otherwise, by possible chance, have come his way.

“Six hundred pounds ! my beloved Maria,” laughed the bridegroom merrily ; “and I would not have had it one penny more for worlds. It charms me immensely — I like it — it is *so* characteristic. What delight it would give to my lady-mother if she only knew it. ‘It serves Fred right,’ she would say ; ‘it is just what he deserves.’ ”

“He gave me fifty pounds, however, Frederick, beside my trousseau,” remarked Maria apologetically, although she was by no means so tickled with the diminutiveness of her portion as was her *fiancé*.

“Did he indeed ? Was he so generous ?” observed

the bridegroom carelessly. "Shall I carry it for you, dearest? It will be safer with me than you."

"No, I thank you," returned Maria decisively; "I have been always accustomed to take care of my own money myself."

Over Mr. Charlecot's expressive countenance there passed an angry shadow, to which the eye of even about-to-be-wedded love could not be blind. Was it then possible, thought the lady, that this light-hearted, impulsive, brilliant being that had dropped at her feet as from the skies, had a will of his own! It was then of the last importance that she should intimate to him at once that he was not to exercise it. An hour or two, however, was yet wanting to that ceremony, not till after which the great question of "Who shall be master?" can be satisfactorily settled; so she temporised, like a judicious general who is expecting reinforcements, and in the meantime declines the offer of battle.

"What *can* you want my fifty-pound note for, dearest Fred?"

"To give to the postillions," returned that gentleman curtly, with a laugh that was not altogether good-natured. "You make as much fuss about it as though it were fifty thousand."

A conversation likewise took place between the bridegroom and one of his new brothers-in-law that same morning, which was not perhaps quite consonant with the ceremony that was about to unite them in the bonds of mutual relationship and confidence. Mr. John Arbour, who was not a little afraid of his high and fashionable relative, had managed to secure his coat-button, if not his attention, in the garden for a few minutes, under the pretence of needing his tasteful aid in the selection of a bouquet for Maria.

“ I say, Charlecot, my dear fellow, I want to say just half-a-dozen words to you upon business——”

“ Not to-day, my dear, John,” replied the bridegroom ; “ surely not to-day of all days. Let four-and-twenty hours at least be devoted to Love, Champagne, Aspirations, and four horses at full gallop. The late lamented Samuel Johnson used to observe that the being whirled rapidly through the air in a post chaise was one of the most delightful of sensations ; how much more charming then must such a recreation be, when your companion in that vehicle is beauty, youth, and——”

“ Yes,” interrupted the other drily, “ I dare say it is, and I sincerely hope you may find it so—although, for the matter of that, Maria is not a chicken. But what I wanted to say to you was this, for I have been talking to Adolphus about it, and he refers me to you. Now, you know I don’t doubt either of you in the least. I have the very highest confidence in you both, especially in you, my dear fellow ; but you must be aware with regard to your business relations with Uncle Ingram——”

“ I beg your pardon for interrupting you,” observed Mr. Frederick Charlecot with a sweet smile, “ but you’re actually gathering hollyhocks. Hollyhocks are the very last flowers—with the single exception, perhaps, of sunflowers—which are adapted for wedding bouquets. Roses ! ah ! that’s much better ! ”

“ I was about to say,” continued Mr. John Arbour, in a harsh and grating tone, as though he were sharpening his voice, “ that you know, as well as I, that Uncle Ingram is not so wise as he used to be by a good deal, and that you and Adolphus can wind him about your little fingers. Now, I myself am a quiet contented fellow enough, but——”

“A thousand pardons,” interposed Mr. Charlecot silkily, “but, doubtless in a moment of inadvertence, you have again gathered a couple of hollyhocks.”

“Oh, hang your hollyhocks,” returned the other, purple with rage.

“They are not *my* hollyhocks, my dear John,” returned Mr. Charlecot coolly. “As a person whose profession must needs accustom him to use the most accurate definitions of property, your looseness of style amazes me. You are in a passion, too, which renders you quite unfit for the calm discussion of business matters. What you would say, however, as far as I can gather from your excited manner, is this: you distrust—absolutely distrust—your own brother, and the influence he is able to exercise over your uncle; and now that I am about to be made a partner in the firm, you begin to entertain a doubt even of myself, connected though I am about to be with you by the most sacred tie. Such a suspicion is cruel and unjust in a very high degree, and pains my sensitive nature more than I can express—I wouldn’t put sage in that nosegay, John, if I were you, for though a thing justly estimated for the stuffing of ducks—thank you—It pains me, I say, although I confess, your feelings are not altogether unnatural: you would like, of course, my dear John, to be made a partner *yourself*.”

“I insist upon being made so, Sir, or I will expose the whole concern. I will show how Adolphus and *yourself*, for your own ends, and to the exclusion of his other lawful kindred, have practised upon an old man of waning and enfeebled powers—”

“This is eloquence, genuine eloquence, my dear John, and I did not think you had it in you. ‘Waning and enfeebled powers—’ good. There he is, my good Sir, lean-

ing upon Adolphus's arm at this very moment. You had better go and tell him, at once, the opinion which you have formed concerning the state of his mind."

Mr. John Arbour bit his lips, but stopped where he was. He had not yet worked himself up to such a pitch of virtuous indignation as could induce him to take a step so perilous as that.

"Now, look here, my sagacious young friend," continued Mr. Charlecot candidly; "just listen to me. I am not a man to do an act of Quixotic friendship even for you; but I am quite ready to benefit you, or any other fellow-creature, if you make it worth my while to do so. Your brother is strongly opposed to your being admitted into partnership with us; I am opposed to it also, because the less number of persons there are to share certain profits, the greater are the individual gains. It is true that, in this case, the gains will in all probability be enormous, but the tendency of the human mind is not upon that account at all the less inclined to be exclusive. Still, a paltry sum like this which I hold in my hand—some six hundred pounds, I say, in ready money—if paid to-day, paid now, to *me*—ridiculous as is the disproportion which it will bear to the ulterior benefits you will derive from the investment—would make me take quite a different view of this matter. I would represent that view to Adolphus. Your uncle would be led to look on the thing in a new light, and the house of Arbour, Arbour, and Charlecot would open its paternal arms to another brother. You would not look for a lion's share of the profits of course, but you shall have that of a lion cub's."

"I have only five hundred pounds of ready money in the world, Sir," responded the other doggedly. "Your proposition is iniquitous and grasp—"

"Not grasping, no," ejaculated Mr. Charlecot hastily; "whatever you call it, John, you shall never call it grasping. Five hundred pounds paid to me by cheque this morning will do, my friend. I believe you, when you tell me you have not a penny more. I can't conceive, for my own part, how you could have ever managed to put by so much. I am afraid you must have denied yourself many luxuries. There it is that you exclusively business men have the pull over men like me. You have such extraordinary powers of forbearance in your personal expenditures. Now, I can never deny myself anything. I can't do it—and indeed I don't try. If I have this money, then, before I start, I pledge you my word that you shall be admitted into the concern with the rest of us. If not— But why should we picture to our minds unpleasant alternatives? You are willing, and we are agreed. This day, then, has given to me a new commercial relation, in addition to those connections by marriage whom I had already reckoned upon."

Nevertheless, the expression upon Mr. John Arbour's face was not quite fraternal as he stepped indoors to write that cheque; while as for the wedding bouquet, he had picked it to pieces hollyhocks and all.

The happy pair departed from the cottage without any of that effusion of tears which mars so many bridals, and at the risk of being convicted of a want of delicacy, we propose to accompany them upon their blissful travel. The house in Golden Square had been placed at their service for a fortnight—half a honeymoon being considered ample in the case of a bride so serious and a bridegroom so newly dedicated to commerce; and thither Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Charlecot hurried, borne upon the wings of—well, it was the Limited Express at all events, and carried them over fifty miles within the hour.

To the mind of any youth—and Mr. Charlecot was but eight-and-thirty, which *is* youth in the marriage market except in the case of such impetuous lunatics as wed upon three hundred a-year—it surely ought to have been a pleasant and exhilarating journey. Nor do we wonder that Maria looked blacker than usual, when, upon that her nuptial morning her husband purchased the *Times* and *Punch* at the railway station, as though he conjectured the way would be a little tedious. And yet, although the bridegroom kept that broad sheet spread before his face during the greater part of the distance, it is but fair to state, that he was by no means occupied with its contents. The fact was, he did not wish his countenance to be too nearly scrutinised by the penetrating glances of his Maria. Incredible as it may seem, in the case of one who had eleven hundred pounds in his pocket, and the prospect of untold wealth about to accrue to him, Mr. Frederick Charlecot's mind was far from being tranquil. It had been a blessed relief to him when, at the commencement of the journey, a near-sighted and nervous young clergyman had taken his place in their *coupé*, and began the perusal of the *Guardian*, unconscious of the withering indignation displayed in the countenance of the bride; and when that divine had awakened to a sense of his situation, and precipitately left the carriage at the next station, Mr. Frederick Charlecot yearned after him, as he was by no means wont to do after clerical persons. Two hours before, as was seen in the matter of the fifty-pound note, he had been half inclined to carry matters with a high hand; but now that the knot was tied, he seemed quite submissive, and content to play second fiddle in that just commencing matrimonial duet—a mere slave of the ring.

"What makes you dull, my Frederick?" demanded Maria, as soon as the obnoxious intruder had made his escape. "Is it possible that you have any care unknown to me?"

"No, love, certainly not; that is——"

"I know, my own pet," interrupted the lady triumphantly: "the eye of woman's love can fathom deeper far than you imagine!"

Mr. Frederick Charlecot looked exceedingly uncomfortable at this mysterious speech, and waited apprehensively for more.

"You are thinking about your own family connections, Frederick, and of the impediments that lie in the way of introducing them to your beloved wife."

"Heavens and earth," ejaculated the bridegroom, wiping his forehead, "that was the very thing I was thinking of, and nothing else."

"Ah, Frederick, you underrate the discernment of us poor women, no less than our independence of character. *We* are not ambitious of social elevation; *we* are not influenced by mere rank and wealth. If I were in your position, small thought of inequality between us would arise in *my* bosom. To love and to be loved, is all we women ask; and it is nothing to us whether the object of our affections be low or high born, so long as he is well principled and devout."

"I am truly gratified, my dearest Maria, to hear you express such sentiments," returned Mr. Charlecot, with an admiration such as he rarely bestowed upon Maria's moral reflections. "I, too, for my own part, care nothing for these artificial distinctions. Here we are at London, however—a city, by-the-bye, teeming with such narrow and miserable prejudices. I have ordered a carriage and pair to meet us at the station, that we

may not be mixed up with the mob of jostling cab-seekers."

In that exclusive equipage the bride and bridegroom were whirled genteelly away to Golden Square. A maid-servant—not the same who had attracted the young affections of Adolphus—opened the door, and Mrs. Trimming was not, as usual, in the hall to receive the visitors. Splendidly attired, but a trifle paler than usual, that lady was nervously awaiting their arrival in the dining-room. She cast her arms affectionately around Maria, who endured her embrace with complacency, but without returning it—precisely as if she was having a new shawl tied on—and then, to that young lady's intense horror, transferred her caresses to the cheek and shoulders of Mr. Frederick Charlecot.

"Mrs. Trimming," ejaculated the outraged bride, "this is a liberty which can never be permitted to a person in your position."

"What! Have you not told her, Dick?" said the old lady, reproachfully. "Have you not had the courage to own your poor old mother?"

"His mother!" shrieked Maria, turning straw colour—which was as pale as her complexion permitted—and sinking backwards upon the sofa.

"Pardon me, dearest," exclaimed Mr. Charlecot, or Jones, or Trimming, throwing himself on his knees beside her—"pardon this lover's stratagem. Rather than lose you, I would have pretended to have been the Prince of Wales."

"Forgive him, my dear daughter, for such you *are* now, and it can't be undone," cried Mrs. Trimming; "he is a husband that any woman may be proud of, no matter who she be. The handsomest, bravest, kindest—But there, I shall leave you together to make it up,

which you will do all the better for the absence of an old woman like me."

She left the room, but Maria remained perfectly still, more like a lady of distinction lying in state than a bride with her groom at her feet ; though Mr. Richard Jones, to do him justice, was eloquent enough by this time—the consciousness of having committed a felony, by marrying under an assumed name, stimulating, doubtless, his desire for a reconciliation.

"To love and to be loved," whispered he, "is all that *I* ask now, my queen. What does it matter, to use your own beautiful and touching language, dearest Maria, whether the object of our affection is of high or low degree ? It is true, I have deceived you, but no one needs to know it except yourself and my mother. I have the manners, the feelings, the capacity for business—all that made up the Frederick Charlecot I assumed to be, in short, except the name. That name I can continue to bear. Say, then, that you forgive your own dear penitent Frederick—let me seal that forgiveness upon these lovely lips by one fond kiss."

If he had suited the action to the word in a proper fashion ; if he had been as rapid in the execution of the matter as in the talking about it ; if he had saluted the beloved object with an eagerness at all proportioned to the circumstances of the case—it is possible that all might yet have been pardoned him. But, hovering over the lady's unattractive features as he did, not so much like a bee over a flower as a gentleman who stands upon the brink of the ice in his first skates, she suddenly started up with a shrill cry of rage, and administered such a box upon his ears, with her virgin hand, as made them ring again.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MOUSE ASSISTS THE LION-(HUNTER).

FROM the first moment that Mrs. Trimming informed her son of the disagreements in the Arbour family, and of the characteristics of the young man who would, probably, sooner or later, succeed to his uncle's wealth, Mr. Richard Trimming, *alias* Jones, *alias* Charlecot, had nourished the idea of aggrandising himself at the expense of her master. He had at first intended to introduce himself to the domestic circle by means of Dick, of whose boyish heart, as we have seen, he soon made easy conquest ; but finding that favour was not to be gained by that road, he had dropped the young gentleman's acquaintance (until it was once more forced upon him), although, perhaps, not without some regret. Thorough scamp, indeed, and selfish profligate as this man was, he was not altogether heartless. There were more elements of good in him than in his wife or in his brothers-in-law, Adolphus and John, who would each have committed their felonies with less compunction than himself, except for the penalties which the law and society have attached to such acts. Save for that vicious but inexplicable attachment which had existed between Maria and her eldest brother—a mere adaptation to double harness of that cart-rope with which they

equally drew iniquity—not one of those three had the least affection, friendship, or regard for a single fellow-creature. Now, Mr. Richard Trimming had, in reality, certain genial sympathies, although his love for himself outweighed all other considerations wholly. He was fond of his mother, although he deceived and pillaged her; and of Lucidora, whom he had ruined, and whose wrongs he had just put it out of his power to ever redress. Without this attraction and capacity for love, he would have been comparatively harmless. Up to that present hour, he had kept his undisputed place in the hearts of those two women, and used his influence there for ill. He had persuaded his poor doting mother, from the first, into secracies and deceptions entirely foreign to her character, until at last—but always with the notion that her Richard would be a prize to repay the fortunate possessor for anything that was lacking else—she had connived at his scheme of marrying her master's daughter under false pretences and a borrowed name. From such a height of doting fondness did she regard him, that the wilful and eccentric motions of this Will-of-the-Wisp son of hers were, from her point of view, almost unobservable; and the infatuated woman would scarcely have conceded a greater constancy to the polestar itself. He had so thoroughly inoculated her with that idea of his being such a “precious high fellow,” that she was far from surprised at his seeking an alliance in a rank of life so superior to his own, and, not without difficulty, had been persuaded by him that any dissimulation on his part was necessary for the attainment of that object. As for Miss Maria, she was conscientiously convinced that that young lady ought to be thankful indeed.

Of Lucidora—of whom, by-the-bye, that other lady

had never heard, and never did hear, so ignorant are we, from first to last, of the real modes of life, and springs of action, even of those who are dearest and most familiar to us—with still greater truth than of Mrs. Trimming might it be said that she had loved not wisely but too well. To the mother, the knowledge of the real character of her darling had been mercifully denied, nor did she ever behold her Richard as he was, but only a certain splendid mirage of the man, which no familiarity nor near approach could dissipate. His mistress was doomed to learn in spite of herself how nearly allied can fickleness and fondness be ; how selfish may be the heart that is not callous, and what tortures it may designedly inflict without being cruel. Since she learned all this, and more, without learning not to love the man, it is no wonder that this woman should have been touched, as has been seen, by the sorrows of young Richard Arbour. Her first serious quarrel with Mr. Jones was upon that lad's account—when she told him of his mother's illness, and thereby induced him to leave the photographee's—and the ill treatment she received in consequence of it, doubtless augmented her interest in his future welfare. A sudden access of prosperity, for which he was indebted to Fortune, through the humble but rapid medium of a dice-box, enabled Mr. Jones to repair to Paris, in the character of Mr. Frederick Charlecot, coincidently with the visit of Adolphus Arbour to that city—an opportunity thus offering itself to the Adventurer, for the first time, of obtaining that young gentleman's confidence. Their meeting in the *café* was planned by the former beforehand, whose ready mind had also previously possessed itself of the most delicate intricacies of the china trade. Mr. Charlecot did not speak falsely, although he meant to do so, when he declared himself to be mentally quali-

fied for a man of business. The billiard-sharper, menagerie-keeper, peripatetic lecturer, photographee, and gentleman of fashion, could doubtless have performed the rôle of dealer in earthenware, so far as brains were concerned, as well as any other. He had in reality only adopted the speculative schemes of Adolphus, although disguising them, by extension and improvement, so that their original inventor was but so far conscious of the plagiarism, as to be flattered by the consideration given to his own ideas by so great a commercial genius. Perhaps by this time Mr. Charlecot had got to believe in those plans himself, the hazardous nature of which was exactly suited to his reckless character. He certainly entertained no intention of ruining the Arbour family—of killing his geese with the golden eggs—but was anxious enough to enrich them, since by that means he enriched himself likewise.

Lucidora, however, who had so often seen Mr. Jones's schemes miscarry, and the precious metals melt in those spendthrift hands, as soon as they reached them, was well aware of what was certain to happen to the house of Arbour if Mr. Frederick Charlecot should obtain any powerful voice in its management. She had absolutely refused to aid in his machinations, or even to remain quiescent, unless she should satisfy herself of Adolphus Arbour's hostility to Dick. If, when he entered that sumptuous chamber in the Hotel Gilbert, the young man had betrayed but one touch of tenderness towards his outcast brother, it might have saved him and his house from ruin and disgrace. The infatuated woman was not such a slave to her companion that she would have let him harm the friends of the lad she loved so well and purely. But if they were not his friends! Mr. Frederick Charlecot permitted her to assure herself upon that point,

being well convinced that he might do so with perfect safety. No arguments of his own could have influenced the impulsive Lucidora so decisively against the young merchant, as that denial of the very existence of his brother heard from his own lips. From that moment, she assisted his bewitchment and subjugation by all means within her power. She was content to remain in Paris alone and friendless, and in lodgings very different from those of the Hotel Gilbert, while Mr. Frederick Charlecot prosecuted his commercial undertakings at Rose Cottage. He had promised her to find some opportunity of permanently befriending Dick, and of promoting meanwhile, as much as possible, his interests, and those of his Sister Maggie, with their estranged uncle. We have seen how little this man kept his word with her in these respects, and how, forgetting what he owed to the poor girl, who had sacrificed herself, weakly and guiltily, but still for *him*, he had deliberately plotted for the hand of Maggie first, and afterwards of her Sister Maria. Not until the day before his marriage had he mustered courage to write and inform Lucidora of the step he was about to take. He did not attempt to exculpate himself in the least, but heaping upon his own head the sackcloth and ashes of invective, bade her at once disclose, if she pleased, his real name and position, which would only entail, he admitted, a just punishment for his perjuries and desertion in his utter and immediate ruin.

Mr. Richard Trimming did not boast himself without some reason of his knowledge of the hearts of those with whom he had to deal. Lucidora read that letter in her Parisian garret without one thought of revenge. She sat with it open in her hand, staring at it with a fixed blank gaze for hours, although the words were engraven upon her mind, and needed no reperusal. No tear welled up

to her eyes ; the very fountain of tears had been trodden out by those cruel feet of his ! Disgraced, deserted, guilty, the poor girl never dreamed of injuring the wretch who had thus cast her off ; not through tenderness for him—that feeling, deep-rooted as it had been, was plucked up now, never to rise in her heart again—but rather from her loathing of so base a creature. Her lips could not have formed his name although their doing so should have been able to blast him like an evil charm. She shuddered as she wrote it upon the blank envelope re-enclosing that five-pound note of his—“all he could, unfortunately, spare at present,” and with which he afterwards purchased a very handsome meerschaum. From that hour, she never left her attic—where she now supported herself with her needle—except to purchase food, and to peruse, for a few minutes every day, the English journals. She was looking for something in their Commercial Intelligence, and at last her eye encountered that it sought.

Then she went home, arrayed herself in her best—wherein, however, she looked like the mother of the Lucidora of a few months back, so deeply does Time set his autograph when trouble guides his pen—and took her way to the hotel of one of the imperial ministers. This gentleman was unknown to her ; she had never even seen him ; but she had confidence that he would both give her audience, and grant her prayer. She had always heard of him as one of those few admitted to the imperial councils in whom the people also reposed a trust. The situation of a warm friend of liberty, such as he was known to be, in the court of the emperor, was strange and anomalous enough, but it was not unparalleled. His own party were understood for certain valid reasons to acquiesce in it. He by no means concealed those

opinions which had at one time made him obnoxious enough to the rulers of France, but on the contrary, was supposed to give no little effect to them. Louis Napoleon, it is said, is not at all times averse to take the advice of an enemy ; nor was the expedition to Italy one likely to be planned in the brain of a despot or at the suggestion of mere courtiers. Let this be as it may, however, the Count de Crespigny was an imperial minister, powerful and yet popular ; and his hotel was in consequence besieged by suitors. Precedence being, as usual, accorded to ladies, Lucidora found herself in the presence of the count far sooner than if she had belonged to the less privileged sex. He was seated at a massive table in the middle of a vast apartment, which to some might seem scantily furnished for the reception-room of a minister ; to others, as admirably adapted for interviews which, although public, were not intended to be overheard by eaves-droppers.

The count regarded Lucidora with a grave but kindly look, and bade her, in the English tongue, be seated.

“ You have a reputation for not forgetting an obligation, Sir,” said she ; “ I am come to remind you of a debt that is still left unrepaid.”

“ To you, Madam, then I trust,” replied the Frenchman gallantly.

“ No, Sir ; not to me. To Richard Smith, who, while an apprentice at a barber’s near Leicester Square——”

“ I remember,” interposed the count ; “ his real name was Arbour, was it not ? He was acquitted on a charge of abetting the death of a certain Russian, in consequence of a representation from this country. He was an honest lad, and I have a great kindness for him. After he was released from the police court, he returned, I understood, to his own friends.”

“He had no friends, Sir, or at least none who could help him. The murder——”

“There was no murder,” remarked the count quietly.

“The execution, then, of this Russian, and the lad’s appearance in the police court in connection with it, were the means of the poor boy’s ruin. His uncle and family disowned him. He has been wandering about the country ever since in the humblest employment—a beast-tamer in a travelling menagerie.”

“And why did you not inform me of these unhappy circumstances before, Madam?”

“Because, Sir, when he had only himself to provide for, he would have preferred to have done so unassisted; at least, I think that, with regard to yourself——” Lucidora hesitated and coloured.

“Pray, proceed, Madam; the poor lad had perhaps some prejudice against me.”

“He loved you, Sir, before the—the execution of the Russian gentleman — the statement concerning which was put into my own hands by some unknown person at the doors of the police court; but since that time——”

“He shrunk from me, you would say, as from an assassin, or at least from an executioner. Ignorant as he was of the nature of the circumstances, I cannot blame him for that. I say to you for his ear, what I would say to no other woman living—but you, like him, I read, are to be trusted—that he need disturb himself upon that account no longer. It so chanced that another hand than mine performed its duty upon the occasion of which we speak. I owe him that confession, at least.”

“He will be truly glad to hear it, Sir, I am sure. He is now in evil plight enough. The father of the young lady to whom he is engaged is reduced in circumstances

by the failure of the young man's uncle, in whose service he was chief clerk."

"I remarked the stoppage of the house but yesterday evening," said the count; "the name attracted me."

"If then, Sir, it lies in your power, as I doubt not it does, to assist Richard Arbour, I leave you in the confidence that he will not be forgotten!"

"I thank you, Madam, for your good opinion, and I should be glad to prove myself worthy of it. We have, however, but few places, I fear, such as Englishmen can fill. You say that he has been accustomed to the care of wild animals; well; I will see what can be done for him. I have your address written down, Madam, and you shall hear from me shortly."

Lucidora bowed her thanks, and was about to leave the room. Her wan appearance, and face, from which all expression save that of settled melancholy had died out at once, now that her mission was ended, touched the count.

"One moment, Madam," exclaimed he with gentleness. "You tell me that it was your own hand that conveyed to this young and innocent sufferer in a great cause the statement which set him free from the grasp of the law, although not, as we had vainly hoped, from all evil consequences. We are therefore indebted to you also. Is there nothing that can be offered in repayment?"

"Nothing, Sir, I thank you."

"Nay, Madam, such disinterested suitors as yourself are so rare here, that we cannot permit them to leave us empty-handed. You have troubles, wrongs, perhaps wants of your own, Madam—am I not right?"

No single word of kindness or of sympathy had fallen upon Lucidora's ear for many a day; she had begun to

deem her heart incapable of feeling such again, so shrunk and withered it seemed to have grown within her; but this unexpected tenderness touched it, as Moses' rod the rock in Horeb, and she sat down again on the chair from which she had risen to depart, and covered her face.

“Is poverty, Madam—and nobody has experienced more bitterly the wretchedness of being poor than he who is now speaking to you—or any obstacle that money can remove, standing between you and happiness? between you, perhaps—for I have known it to do so—and one without whom life itself seems to you not worth living for——”

She held up her hand in piteous entreaty that he should cease. “Life is worth nothing now to me, Sir,” returned she after a little, and her tone was even more hopeless than her words. “When I have received this favour at your hands for Richard Arbour, I have done with happiness.”

“Suppose that I find some employment for him here in Paris, will it not be happiness for you who love him, and who by your own advocacy have obtained it, to welcome him and his bride? When we look no more for pleasure upon our own account, it oftentimes befalls us through that which we can confer on others.”

“No, Sir, no; I would not see them for worlds. They must never know that I demanded aught for them. Through me it is, in part (although they know it not), that this last misfortune has befallen them; and therefore it is fit that through me the reparation should come. But for myself—for *me*—I am not one to welcome to her home a bride, a wife. I shall be far away when she arrives.”

“You intend to leave Paris, then,” returned the minister. “May I ask whither, and in what capacity?”

“All places are the same to me, Sir,” answered **Luci-**

dora, rising ; “so, at least, that I meet no eyes which used to know me. I can work with my needle ; I can tend the sick ; therefore I am not one to starve. Wherever I am, and whatever I do, however, I shall not forget the kindness of Count de Crespigny to an unknown, friendless, fallen woman.”

Upon the next morning, Lucidora received two letters, one of which concerned herself, and ran as follows : “*You say, Madam, you can tend the sick, and wish to leave Paris. The office of female sub-superintendent at the Marseilles Convalescent Hospital is now vacant, and at your service. The duties and emoluments are as subjoined.*” The other letter—which was left open for her inspection —was official, and directed to Richard Arbour. The first smile which had visited Lucidora’s lips for months played round them as she addressed this missive to Mr. Mickleham’s house at Kensington ; where, however, she little guessed that Dick would be found in person.





CHAPTER XXXV.

MARRIED AND SETTLED.

DN spite of Mr. William Mickleham's impatience and sarcasms, Dick kept the contents of his letter to himself until Lucy and Maggie were both in the room to hear them. Uncle Ingram was asleep, and Mr. Mickleham the elder had taken that opportunity to leave the sick man's bedside for an hour's fresh air, or the news would perhaps have been discussed in family conclave, since it certainly concerned them all. In that letter, than which, since the invention of letters, scarce any could have conferred a greater joy upon its recipient, was offered the post of *Aide-naturaliste* at the *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris, for the young lion-tamer's immediate acceptance. Appended to the official document and certain satisfactory details concerning salary and house-accommodation, there were a few sentences written in a hand which Dick remembered to have somewhere seen before: “*I write these few lines after visiting your new home, as I hope it will be, my brave young Sir. It seems to me pleasant enough, and one to which no young gentleman need be ashamed to bring his bride. The sitting-rooms are certainly preferable to the saloons of Monsieur Tipsaway, which you and I recollect so well. As soon as you arrive in Paris, it is my wish to welcome you and yours with this hand—which is as stainless as your own.*

“DE CRESPIGNY.”

“What the deuce does he mean by stainless?” inquired Mr. William Mickleham, in secret, perhaps, a little outraged at the prospect of Dick’s entering the respectable guild of government officials.

“It’s only his French way of expressing himself,” explained Richard, half-smothered by the sudden embraces of the two young ladies. How they hung around his neck and cried for joy, and smiling through their tears looked all the lovelier—like landscapes in the shower while the sun shines! How near, now, after all, was that great happiness which had a few minutes before seemed so far distant, without one sign however small —like the cloud out of the sea that was but as a man’s hand—to tell of its propinquity! How thankful they all were!

“How I wish dear papa was in!” cried Lucy, “that he might share our joy! He is miserable enough just now, I fear; for he is gone to Darkendim Street, where the sale begins to-day.”

“Then let us go there too,” cried Dick; and in five minutes the two young people were away together. Never before had Mr. Richard Arbour so appreciated a walk to the City; never had the warehouse—tush—never had that bower in Darkendim Street appeared one-tenth part so beautiful and attractive. There were, however, certain material changes in its aspect, as well as that ideal metamorphosis into the Halls of Dazzling Light which the wand of love has power to effect even in the most unpromising localities. The sombre street was thronged with an unwonted population. A great tide of people swept in through Uncle Ingram’s doorways, without the breakwater of a single clerk or warehouseman to check the babbling waves. In vain the gigantic crates, bursting with hay as usual, opposed themselves like a

volunteer barricade to the invaders. They surged up the narrow staircase that led to that abode of *vertu*, the pattern room, with the indecent haste of votaries of the Temple of Vice. Connoisseurs, dealers, dilettanti, dowagers with a mania for china dragons and monsters such as ordinary clay, one hopes, would shrink from forming, were pouring into that sacred chamber where Mr. Mickleham had erst been wont to sit, surrounded by his gods of clay and porcelain. Perched at the very desk from which the old gentleman had first smiled a welcome to Dick, was an auctioneer, expatiating upon the rarity of each article as he took it down from its hook. There was one face in that eager crowd, the unspeakable woe and indignation of which at once riveted the attention of the two newcomers—that of Mr. Mickleham himself, who was standing immediately beneath the rostrum, with the expression of one whose children were being sold into captivity to savages before his eyes. Whenever the auctioneer began to speak, this gentleman put his fingers into his ears, and kept them there until he saw the hammer brought down upon the wood, and thereby knew that the fate of the precious relic was sealed, and the torture for that time over.

Dick and Lucy took some time to get at him through the throng, but he never looked round; and when they reached him, she had to grasp his arm before she could attract his notice.

“My dear child, my dear Dick,” cried he, “is not this terrible? I positively cannot listen to the Vandal. It is my belief that he doesn’t know Staffordshire from Meissen ware. The Babylon brick, Sir, was given away to one of these idiots for four pounds fifteen. Oh Dick, Dick, it is an awful thing to be poor, let the divines say what they will. If one had but had some fifty or sixty

pounds in one's pocket to spare—— But there, what's the use of talking."

"What is this?" cried Dick hastily, as the auctioneer held up an exquisite piece of white porcelain. "Is it not something that you used to value very highly?"

"Value! ah," groaned the old gentleman, "you may say that. It's priceless: it's worth fifty pounds to any man, and to me five hundred. It's Bottcher's own handiwork, and yet that fellow is going to pass it round among these sacrilegious bunglers, whose fingers are—— Good Heavens! I thought that Jew-pedlar-looking fellow yonder must have dropped it; this is worse than watching a man upon the tight rope seventy feet over one's head. He is actually scratching the bridge of his Hebrew nose with it. To what base uses may not adversity bring the best of us. What an awful example of reckless trading, Master Richard, is this day's work! Now the man with the hammer has got it again, and is about to blaspheme that jewel with his ignorant tongue. Excuse me, but I'm deaf till it's over." And Mr. Mickleham again preserved his ears from outrage by putting his fingers into them.

"Five, ten, fifteen, sixteen——thank you——sixteen ten; no advance on sixteen ten; sixteen ten for this exquisite piece of white porcelain; seventeen——thank you, Sir; *you* have an eye, I see (to Dick), for worth and rarity. *Going, going;* no advance on seventeen pounds; then, *gone.*" And Dick's address was handed up to the auctioneer.

"What did it go at?" inquired Mr. Mickleham, peevishly, not even looking round to see who was the purchaser, but keeping his eyes fixed upon the departing treasure. "At seventeen pounds! That is robbery, Sir; rank, wicked robbery. The very handle is worth the

money. He is coming on to the Chinese bottle and the Saxony vase, and he might just as well smash them with his hammer as knock them down at the prices which they will fetch to-day."

Those two triumphs of the plastic art, as well as some others, of which the old clerk spoke with especial rapture, were similarly knocked down to Dick's bidding, over the very head of the unconscious Mr. Mickleham. It was cruel to keep him in ignorance of their destination, but it would have been ruinous to have informed him at that period, since, had he known his ability to purchase them, his passionate eagerness would have raised the biddings, even if he had not insisted upon naming some figure more consistent with what he considered the legitimate value of the article.

When, as the three walked home together, Mr. Mickleham was informed of the bright prospect that had suddenly offered itself across the Channel—brightest, as Dick affectionately assured him, inasmuch as that he would now have a home to offer in *his* turn to that friend and father whose doors had been ever so hospitably open to himself—the old gentleman's eyes were dimmed with joy indeed; but when Dick, by way of a diversion, spoke of the trick they had just been playing him, and how that all his porcelain favourites, inclusive even of the Babylon brick—supposed to be irretrievably lost, but cunningly recovered from its short-sighted purchaser by an extra fifteen shillings—had been brought in on purpose to adorn the chamber to be set apart for himself in their Parisian dwelling, the large rare tears began to fall down the old man's cheeks in a manner too attractive for a public thoroughfare, and a cab had to be called to convey the delighted connoisseur and his children home.

Little by little, very slowly but surely, Ingram Arbour's frame recovered from its terrible shock, and the two young people were married. As soon as they returned from their honeymoon, part of which was passed at a south-country village, in the vicinity of Mr. Tredgold's establishment, in order that Dick might bid good-bye to his old friends, his uncle removed to their home in Paris, where, amid new scenes, and out of the reach of all that could remind him of his late misfortunes, he improved more rapidly. He never, indeed, got to be the strong man that we once knew him to be, but he could move about and enjoy the sunshine in the pleasant *Jardin*, leaning upon Richard's arm, whom he never by any accident called Dick. Nobody but Maggie and Lucy, and they only by misadventure, were now, in fact, ever heard to pronounce that disrespectful monosyllable. Completely provided for, in a good social position, married and settled, with a *nucleus*—that is to say, they had one baby when I last heard of them—the nucleus of a family already established, Dick's occupation as a Scape grace, it is clear, was utterly gone. Being, as he now was, Richard Arbour, Esquire, *Aide-naturaliste* of the *Jardin des Plantes*, friend of an imperial minister, one who settled the bills of his household weekly, fully eligible for the office of churchwarden (should Paris, happily for herself, ever have such a dignity to bestow), it is evident that a history with such a title as ours can proceed no further. The young gentleman himself, and one other, were perhaps the only persons who remembered, after a little, that he had ever played such a *rôlè* as that of *mauvais sujet*. Uncle Ingram, although what is called his "head for figures" was gone, often found himself gravely thinking whether *sujets* were not sometimes made *mauvais* by indiscreet treatment, and asked for

giveness of his nephew tacitly a hundred times a-day. Only once, however, he spoke of the matter, as he and Richard were taking their accustomed walk together.

“Do you know, lad,” said he, in a troubled tone, “it was not *I* who sent for you when I was taken ill yonder? I was as blind as ever. It was our dear Maggie who did that of her own noble heart. How much—how much I owe to her!”

“Not more than I, uncle; not more than I, be sure. What she has given me is much, but what she has saved me from, can never be told in words. I know how precious was her help, but the greatness of the ruin from which she has preserved me, I shall never know. What quicksands, what sunken rocks I have been amongst, unseen by me, I cannot reckon; but to have escaped the visible dangers, is cause enough for gratitude. When this unseasoned, half-decked craft was most unseaworthy; when the storm was fiercest, when the night was darkest, Uncle Ingram, her love seemed to shine down upon me like a star, and by it alone I steered.”

“And you got into port, Richard,” returned his uncle, smiling sadly, “when the *A i* clipper-ship was lost with all her cargo.”

“Ay, Sir,” replied the young man gravely; “but I reached it by the most dangerous channel, where ninety-and-nine **are** wrecked for one that gets safely through. I should be sorry, indeed, if my example should ever tempt another young gentleman to turn Scapegrace; for though the North-west Passage may now and again, perhaps, be adventured in safety, for practical purposes it will always be found better to *go round*.”

“There is something to be said, however,” observed Uncle Ingram stoutly, “against dogmatical and self-sufficient old gentlemen.”

“There is nothing to be said,” interrupted Dick, pressing the other’s arm as it rested on his own, “but how much we owe to Maggie. I thank God that she has found a husband worthy of her.”

Nephew and uncle had both the highest opinion of Mr. William Mickleham, but they did not quite think *that* either, although they often said it. It would have been difficult, indeed, to have found a husband worthy, in their eyes, of her of whom they spoke.

The two young couples visit each other every year, and Mr. Mickleham the elder divides his time between them, living six months in London, and six in Paris. His small but snug apartment in the latter city is provided, according to promise, with the chief of those porcelain treasures which used to surround him in Darkendim Street.

There are also certain other inanimate objects preserved with equal care, and possessing no less of interest with divers members of that household.

Item, the screen that was to have been parted with at that “tremendous sacrifice” of seven and six, now holds its place in the little drawing-room, memorial of a less prosperous though far from hopeless time.

Item, in Richard’s desk, along with a tiny curl from the as yet somewhat fluffy and ill-provided head of the *nucleus*, lies the lock of soft brown hair he stole from his Lucy when he played the barber at Miss Backboard’s; while not less fondly treasured by its side, is the half-crown which Maggie threw to him on that lonesome night when he crouched, a houseless wanderer, outside his uncle’s house in Golden Square.

The pride and glory of the household furniture, however, and the especial delight of the *nucleus* from the time it began to “take notice,” is Item four—a magnifi-

cent tiger-skin, which either hangs over the drawing-room sofa, or forms a soft and luxurious couch for the infant upon the floor.

We can well imagine how, in time to come, it will be young Ingram's highest treat to hear his father tell of the terrible creature whose covering this once was, and how it killed two men, and was within a very little of exterminating papa ; for this was erst the royal robe of Semiramis—presented by Mr. and Mrs. Tredgold to Richard Arbour as a marriage gift.

In Mr. Mopes's lecture upon natural history, the most eloquent portion, now, is that peroration wherein he speaks of Arborino the Invincible ; of the feats he did, and of the beasts he slew, and of how he is now officially connected with the imperial government of France.

The memory of that tremendous tiger-queller is still fragrant among all Mr. Tredgold's company, not excepting the Earthman and the Earthwoman, "lowest of created human beings." Another lion-hunter has indeed been procured from the arid plains of Central Africa, but the striped mantle of Arborino has not, it is said, descended upon his successor's shoulders with much efficacy.

It is fair to Mr. Frederick Charlecot's reputation as a man of honour to state, that the promise he made to John Arbour at Rose Cottage, regarding his admission into partnership, was kept to the letter, and that when the great crash took place—early as it came—the young gentleman found himself so securely connected with the firm that he was as irretrievably ruined as the rest. The only one of the family who were pecuniarily benefited in the end by their connection with their uncle was his Nephew Dick, who, without using flattery or deceit, *did*

secure his six hundred pounds, and might, had he chosen, have kept it.

Adolphus, notwithstanding the house's failure, has not altogether given up commercial pursuits; the last news I got of him was as a peripatetic street-vendor of penny microscopes, in which interesting employment his excellent business habits will doubtless make up for his ignorance of science. He has a small income independent of this profession, supplied by some charitable hand, as has also his Brother John; who himself earns a tolerable livelihood, by benevolently inditing, in his beautiful clerkly hand, letters of recommendation for those who cannot write and have little merit, and excellent characters for servants who cannot procure them elsewhere. The police, however, with their accustomed harshness of epithet, entitle him a begging-letter impostor.

Mrs. Trimming resides with Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Charlecot, whom she maintains out of her savings (with some annual assistance, in spite of all that has come and gone, from her late master), but without exercising the usual sovereignty of resident mothers-in-law; Maria, it is whispered, being a great deal more than a match for the other two. One of the very last appeals in the new Divorce Court—the only one, say some ecclesiastical persons, which has failed in its abominable object—was from one Frederick Charlecot, praying for protection and separation from his wife—who, he was well aware, for her own sake, would not charge him with marrying under an assumed name—on the ground of cruelty. It was intimated to him, however, that, unless he could get proof that somebody else had supplanted him in the affections of his consort, no relief could be given to him. “Whereupon,” says the report, “the applicant left the court with

an air of the greatest dejection, exclaiming that in that case there was no hope for him whatever."

I had almost forgotten to say that, soon after the birth of Ingram Arbour the younger, the most exquisite baby uniform that was ever turned out by female fingers arrived at Mrs. Richard Arbour's, without any other notification of the donor than the initial L. worked on the hem of the garment.

"Heaven knows how glad I should be to take her by the hand," exclaimed the young mother earnestly.

"Thank you, love," cried Richard tenderly. "I wish, indeed, that she would come and see what true friends are left to her."

"Perhaps it is better as it is, after all," observed Mr. Mickleham the elder, with a nervous remembrance of Dick's lady visitor with that very unusual name at the police office.

"Stuff and nonsense, William," returned the other grandparent, with a touch of his ancient indignation. "Who are we, that we should venture to make outcasts of our fellow-creatures, whose follies are often far more than outweighed by our own uncharity and selfishness?"

"That is very true," answered Mr. Mickleham, with his customary submission to the opinions of his former chief.

Lucidora, however, although made aware, by a common friend, of these kindly feelings towards her, has as yet remained at Marseilles, where her life is by no means an unhappy one.

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